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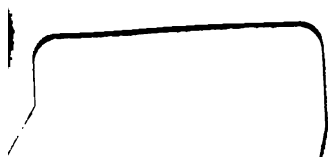
HARMONY HALL

A STORY FOR GIRLS

MARION HILL

Fiction, American

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To Darrell,

From

Mr. Morrison

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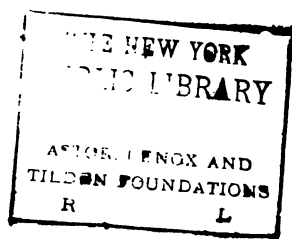
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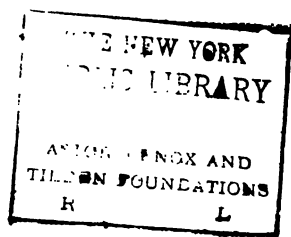
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HARMONY HALL







“Dear Miss Harmony Hall, will you go to the theater with me?”
he asked, earnest in spite of his attitude

See page 165

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HARMONY HALL

A Story for Girls

BY

MARION HILL

AUTHOR OF "THE PETTISON TWINS"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

ROBERT EDWARDS

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R.



BOSTON

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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TO
EDWIN ROBERT HILL
THE DEAREST LITTLE BOY IN A WORLD FULL OF THEM

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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HARMONY HALL

CHAPTER I

"Dusting is a waste of time—it is just taking specks off one thing and putting them on another," said Gappy. "I wonder why I look more like a monkey to-day than usual."

The connection between these otherwise unrelated remarks was the fact that she was wiping the frame of the sitting-room mirror, and was far from satisfied with her reflection. She critically studied her solemn, small face.

"It must be because I wrinkle up my forehead when I worry, and I've worried lots lately."

If the two other girls in the room felt that they were being addressed they paid

but scant attention and certainly made no reply.

"Then, again, I'm small and thin."

No assent, no denial came to her assistance.

"And I've heard Dr. Cody telling Lady that I have a nervous temperament. Monkeys have a nervous temperament, too—very."

Each time that she paused—and her pauses fairly bristled with the intimation that she was ready to be spoken to—the same two sounds were heard in the room, and only those two. One was from the clock. The other was from Harmony, who, generally as busy as a bee, was now sitting idly at the piano thumping out of that patient instrument a succession of weird tones. Allegra, the third girl, was curled up on the sofa, absolutely motionless.

"And I'm fond of climbing," pursued the dusting one, refusing to feel slighted, though choking down a sigh. "It must

be fun to swing by your tail. In summer time I could get up in the tree in front of our house and go from here to the grocery store in the branches, head downward all the way. And, perhaps, the other monkeys would throw me a civil word now and then when I spoke to them."

Even this strong hint proving of no avail Gappy turned her attention to the bookcase, dusting it thoroughly.

"Well, if we are a dismal family, goodness knows we have cause enough," she conceded, at length. "I forgive both of you. Since you seem to be in a *listening* mood I'll do a little talking." She had a stack of books in her thin arms, and these she deposited upon the floor, making a wobbly column upon which she seated herself and from which she harangued her sisters impressively.

"You are the oldest, Allegra, and now that we are poor you ought to be able to earn some money. But you can't. The

trouble with you is that you're kept so busy being pretty that you haven't time to work. Just because your eyes are big and your hair is long and your hands and feet are small and you can write poetry you think you must act like a princess and do just as little as you know how."

Pausing severely she looked hard to see whether or not Allegra appeared abashed. Made aware that she did not, Gappy concluded scathingly:

"Give you a bit of wire, a scrap of velvet, and a turkey feather, and you can make a theater bonnet that is a dream (though we never go to theaters), but not to save your life can you sew on a button to stay or darn a stocking without making the hole bigger than it was."

Poor Allegra, worried, but not too worried to be in one of her prettiest poses, kept on staring blankly at the ceiling.

Gappy gave her up and turned her remarks upon the piano thumper.

"You, Harmony, you're not particularly clever at making a theater bonnet, but you can sew a seam so that it will never, never rip, and you darn a stocking before the hole comes instead of afterward, and you can patch a thing until it is like new. But what good is it? Nobody would dare hire you for a seamstress, because you are so 'society' looking—sort of big and clean and serious, as if your dress trailed after you, though it doesn't. I'd just as soon hire a countess to wash for me as you. See what comes of being a boy—there's Surrey, he walked right into a job at two dollars a week. Goodness! I wish I were a boy. I'd get something to do. But because I'm a girl, and the youngest—the baby—I'm supposed to know nothing about anything—and to say less. I've *heard* of bumps on a log and now I *see* them."

Here Allegra squirmed miserably and Harmony thumped with more dismal intentness. As a rule, Gappy approved of

everything that Harmony said or did, but these chords struck her as being too frightful.

"I'm perfectly surprised at you, Harmony Hall!" fumed the child, suddenly losing her self-control. "Haven't we trouble enough already without your making us listen to those horrible noises?"

"This is not strictly a 'noise,' dear," explained Harmony, repeating the offending sounds. "At least, not when it is followed by *this*. Listen." And she played a second chord in which all the wayward notes of the first came to their proper intervals and were melodiously at rest. "It is a freak in music, Gappy, and is called a resolved harmony. (That's what I'm trying to be. You'll understand better in a minute.) You see, the first chord is harsh without the second, and the second is less complete without the first. I'm playing them over and over, not to be irritating, but because they are soothing to my state of mind, for I am going to tell

you all something soon that will jar you terribly unless I can find a calming thought to finish with—the second chord.”

“Don’t talk like Allegra,” begged Gappy. “One poetry crank in the family is enough.”

“Poetry is my sole happiness,” said Allegra, rousing herself dreamily. “Where would I go for comfort if not to the poets in this dark hour of father’s—father’s—illness?”

Gappy stirred restlessly at this sentence, especially at the last word, and asked sharply:

“Do the poets give you the help you ask for?”

“Indeed they do,” was the soulful reply.

“Good enough! Then ask them from me, please, how we are to get the money for the taxes; how to make the grocer keep on trusting us; where our next dresses are to come from when these get through falling to pieces, and how we are to get new

shoes for Surrey. Jog the poets by telling them that his toes are already showing."

So fierce was this outburst that Allegra quite blinked and felt very insulted and hurt; but Harmony's heart ached for Gappy, sorry that the "baby" of them all should have cause to be so worldly wise. So she swung around on the piano stool and favored her little sister with one of her sunniest, friendliest smiles.

"Bombard me instead of the poets, Gappy," she said cheerily. She was serious as well as cheery. That was one of Harmony's ways—she never giggled nor said "smart" things, yet she was as sunshiny as the day was long. "I think I have an answer to some of your questions. These questions have been more and more difficult since father has been—has been—*sick*."

"Wait a moment," blurted Gappy, looking both frightened and defiant. "Wait a moment. We needn't pretend any longer about father. Everybody knows it by now,



“Bombard me instead of the poets, Gappy,” said Harmony, cheerily. “I think
I have an answer to some of your questions.”

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I guess, for I told Mrs. Morton, the minister's wife. She stopped me on the street yesterday and asked how father's *fever* was, and when he was going to get better. After thinking for a moment, trying to find something to say, I came right out with the truth—"

"Oh, no!" cried the older girls.

"I did. I said quite plainly, 'Mrs. Morton, the fever left father some time ago, but his head wasn't able to get over it on account of his trouble about his business failing, and he is mad—insane. We don't know if he is ever going to be any better than he is now.' Then I ran away, fast, so that she could not ask me any more."

"Gappy, how could you? How dared you?" sobbed Allegra, bursting into tears.

Harmony, dry-eyed but pale, leaned back against the piano.

"It had to be done," cried Gappy, her shrill little voice shaking with nervous grief. "We couldn't keep on pretending

forever. And it's nothing that is father's fault. He can't help being—crazy.”

“Don't say the dreadful-sounding word!” wept Allegra.

“If we can bear the thing we can bear the word,” said Harmony presently. “Gappy was right. People must know some time. She was a brave little sister.”

“Oh, Harmony!” choked the child. She was a fighter and rather gloried in getting scolded, but kindness and praise were always upsetting to her. She rushed into Harmony's arms and hid her face while she whispered: “The word doesn't hurt as much as the thing. I can't bear to go into his room. A little while ago I went there to speak to Lady, and he asked me whose little girl I was and what was my name, and he said that he was nine years old and that his name was Bobbie, and he made me call him ‘Bobbie,’ and he called Lady ‘Ma,’ and asked her to wind his top for him.”

Even Harmony was weeping now.

Their dreamy, dignified, gentle father had been idolized by them all their lives, and this dreadful state of his, brought on by too much worry, endless work, ultimate business failure, and sickness, was more than they were able to bear with calmness.

"Do you think Dr. Cody told the truth, or was he only trying to comfort us when he said that father's mind *might* come back to him?" asked Gappy, raising her head at last.

"The truth, I hope," answered Harmony. "But he made it a condition that father should have the best of care and food, perfect freedom from worry, and that Lady should devote her entire time to him, playing with him as if he were really her little boy, as he thinks he is."

"How easy it is for doctors to talk," said Allegra angrily. "He knows that we have not a cent in the world. He knows that we have taxes to pay and nothing to pay them with; that we owe bills and bills and bills,

his among the others. Yet he talks about good food and rest and freedom from worry—things we can't possibly get!"

"We can," contradicted Harmony quietly, "because we *must*."

"H'sh! Lady's coming. Don't let us look as if we had been crying," warned Gappy. She darted to her books and began to slap them cheerfully into place. She jiggled, too, as if she were running over with hopefulness. Allegra tried to hum a little tune, and Harmony invitingly punched up the sofa pillows.

Into the room came their mother, a frail, sweet little woman whose face lately was so sad and pale that a stillness was apt to fall upon the girls when they saw it, as if it belonged to some pilgrim from the Land of Sorrow, a gentle stranger whom they knew not exactly how to greet.

"Is he asleep, Lady, dear?" ventured Harmony.

"Yes," answered Lady, in the dazed,

hushed voice of one who has lost strength while watching at a sickbed, and lost courage, too. "He is lying on the floor on my shawl, like a child, his tin toys all around him. Oh, my poor, big boy, my poor husband!"

She put her arms around Harmony and began to weep.

"Stop it! Stop it!" commanded Harmony, almost beside herself, and, therefore, talking very cheerfully and bravely. "You have to keep bright and hopeful for father's sake. Doctor said so. Come, snuggle down into this pillowy place all fixed for you."

The mother's weakness stirred the girls into extra helpfulness. Allegra set about making a cup of tea. She did it with many a flourish of her small white hands in order to admire them, pretending she was a hostess at a reception, but she did it lovingly, too, and that was the main thing. Harmony petted her charge and poked the

cushions around her, while Gappy, with a wisdom beyond her years, launched as if unconsciously into a cheery flow of gabble about everything and nothing.

"What do you think, Lady? I saw Elizabeth Peters in the street to-day. She is the girl in my class whose dresses are always longer in the front than in the back. I don't b'lieve her mother makes them that way. I b'lieve it's the way Elizabeth stands—like a kangarang. Like an oranga-too. No; I guess I've got those animals mixed. Well, never mind. I want to tell you what she said. She told me she's paid to sing. *Paid!* In a real church, too. In a sort of nightgown choir, only that's not what they call it. But they wear long white wrappery things and have a flat business on their heads, like a book cover with a tassel. *Paid!* Just because her voice is high and squeaky. Why, mine's much higher and squeakier than hers. See if it isn't."

The child began to pipe with a wonderful sweetness in a voice as natural as a canary's but so comically high that it finally provoked a general burst of laughter.

This laughter, though, was quickly stilled, and a council of ways and means was soon in progress.

"The situation is hopeless," despaired Lady. "I have never been one to give up, but I must now! I see no hope anywhere. We are penniless. Your poor father will hardly let me out of his sight, so that I cannot even attend to my house, far less attempt to earn anything. Dear little Surrey's two dollars a week is as nothing compared with our awful need. What *are* we to do?"

"The doctor said his assistant would rent a room from us," began Gappy, ending dolefully with: "If—if—"

"If we had a room to spare, which we have not," finished Allegra. "Oh, why

can't I earn anything? I would sweep crossings if I got the chance!"

"I can see you," crooned Gappy, shutting her eyes the better to conjure up the picture. "First, you'd spend an hour in dressing and curling your hair. Then you'd squeeze into your high-heeled slippers so that your feet would look tiny. And you'd borrow Harmony's white veil and pin it over your nose to save your precious complexion. And you'd gasoline your one and only pair of white kid gloves and put them on to save your hands from freckling. And you'd tie a blue bow to the broom handle, and you'd sweep as if you were painting a picture. And you'd try to faint at the feet of the first nice-looking gentleman who came within a mile of you, hoping that he'd take you to his gorgeous palace and marry you for your bravery and let you live in seal-skins forever after and eat buns."

"It would be quite a neat job to faint at

the feet of a person a mile off, Gappy," criticized Harmony.

"Oh, Allegra could do it—the poets would help her."

"Make fun of me. Don't mind my feelings," said Allegra sadly. "It might be a little kinder, though, to suggest something I *could* do, instead of being pleased to discourage me."

"Do you really want to work?" asked Gappy rather dryly.

"Most certainly."

"Then you needn't go far to find it."

"I needn't?"

"No. I know of something right in town."

"Something that pays?"

"Pays well, so I've heard."

"What is it?"

"You know Miss Mallory? The cross old woman with the big nose and the pet dogs?"

"Of course. Who doesn't? Disagreeable old thing."

"Well, her servant girl has left her again and she's hunting for another. They never stay many weeks. That's why she has to give big wages. *There's* a noble chance for you. Five dollars a week. No company allowed. Thursday and Sunday afternoons out."

"You need not be insulting!" said Allegra, with very red cheeks. "As if I would disgrace my name and my family by being a servant! When I speak of 'work' I mean respectable, decent work, as befits a lady. I may be poor but I won't be common!"

"That's one comfort, then," said Gappy. "Well, I've done my best. I thought being a servant would be such a promotion for a crossing sweeper."

"Dear girls, do not jeer at each other," begged Lady. "Squabbling will not help us in the least."

"Especially squabbling over a thing that doesn't exist," said Harmony, in rather a queer way.

"What doesn't exist?" asked Gappy, struck by this queerness.

"The vacancy in Miss Mallory's establishment."

"You mean that she's got a servant?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"Because I am the servant."

"What!"

"I applied for the position this morning (that's what I wanted to tell you by means of the 'resolved harmony!') and she engaged me."

"Harmony!" cried Lady pityingly.

"Harmony!" scolded Allegra disgustedly.

"Harmony!" squealed Gappy delighted.
"What fun. And how good of you. But queer. No wonder Surrey calls you his Cracked Hominy! Tell us all about it!"

CHAPTER II

"There is not much to tell," admitted Harmony. "Still it was exciting while it lasted."

"While what lasted?" asked a new voice—Surrey's.

The boy had come home from the store, tired and low-spirited as always, and now sat lonesomely off by himself in a far corner as if he did not quite belong to the rest. "While what lasted, sister?"

"My charming interview with Miss Mal-lory," answered Harmony, throwing him a welcoming smile. She always treated Surrey as nicely as if he were someone else's brother.

"The old lady with the nose?"

"One would think she were the only old lady in the world who owned such a thing."

"Didn't know you knew her."

"I didn't until I—well, *called* upon her to-day."

"You have more courage than I," gloomed Surrey. "I wouldn't go up those spotless marble steps and attack that solemn front door for a fortune."

"I went to the back door," said Harmony meaningly.

The cause of Allegra's pronounced shiver was a mystery to Surrey. He saw that there was something of which he was still ignorant, so he withdrew from the conversation and listened.

"How did you feel going to the back door, Harmony?" asked Gappy, whose interest was psychological.

"I should say like a beggar!" threw in Allegra angrily.

"Oh, no. Beggars so seldom go to the back door. They just love to prance up to the front. Well, Miss Mallory herself answered my knock. Her nose *is* long and

sharp. It frightened me. I could only stand and stare at her.

“‘Speak!’ she snapped. It sounded as if she were talking to a dog and I just ached to bark back an obedient ‘Woof!’ but instead I said: ‘Good morning, Miss Mallory. I am Harmony Hall. I have come to see if I can do your work for you.’

“‘Work?’ she snapped again. She looked surprised. It is her fancy, I’ve found out, to say as few words as she possibly can. ‘Work?’

“‘Yes, I thought you wanted a servant, a hired girl. Am I mistaken?’

“‘Not a bit. The others were. They thought I wanted help, a maid, a housekeeper, a companion, an assistant, a domestic, anything but a servant, a hired girl. You are the first young woman with brains who has applied. Glad to see you. Come in. Sit down.’

“She stalked through the kitchen into a

pretty sitting-room, and I followed. She plumped down into a rocker and I came dreadfully near snuggling into a comfortable armchair like a visitor, but, remembering my character in time, I sat primly down in a straight-backed chair and tried not to look about me—she has so many pictures and books around.

“Then a voice said in the funniest way: ‘Aw, there,Smarty! Aw, there!’ It was a pink-and-green parrot. Talk of noses! Miss Mallory and the parrot might have been twins! Next there was a scutter and a rush and two of the dearest dogs in the world, tiny black spaniels, raced up to me, wagging frantically, jumped into my lap, kissed me on the eyes and nose, and finally wriggled their ways under my arms, one under the left and one under the right. There they promptly went to sleep, but kept waking suddenly every now and then to snatch a kiss from each other or to dab one

on my chin. I haven't had such fun in a long time. Miss Mallory looked at them queerly.

" 'Perhaps they like servants,' she said. 'They wouldn't go near the companions. And I don't blame them. Can you cook?'

"Well, that was the first of a million questions, more or less, all of which I answered truthfully and, I suppose, satisfactorily, for she got up with a jerk and said: 'Come to-morrow.'

" 'Am I engaged, Miss Mallory?' I asked, standing too, with the dear little dogs still under my arms. I couldn't help smiling. She didn't answer right away but looked at me curiously.

" 'You are a pretty girl,' she said. (Think of that!) 'What made you take to housework instead of entering an office or a store?'

" 'I didn't want to be stared at all day by everybody, snubbed by strangers, and ordered around by a man,' I answered.

"She snorted. You can't quite tell what a snort may mean.

" 'What did you say is your queer name?' she demanded.

" 'Harmony Hall. Harmony.'

" 'Outlandish!'

" 'Change it, if you like, Miss Mallory. I'll answer to anything.'

" 'Change? Never! If you knew how hard it has been for me to keep harmony in my kitchen you would not talk of changing.'

" 'Aw, there, Smarty!' sneered the parrot, stepping up and down as if his perch was hot. To hide my laughter I bent down and put the little dogs on the floor.

" 'Am I engaged, Miss Mallory?' I asked again.

" 'Would I ask you to come to-morrow if you were not?' was her reply.

"She fires off her sentences so sharply that it makes you feel as if doors were slamming. Not having another word to say I departed—engaged. I felt quite proud.

And now that I've told you all everything there is to tell," ended Harmony, "I hope you'll help me fix my clothes."

Without a comment Surrey got up and left the room. Harmony threw a worried glance after him.

"Fix your clothes!" echoed Allegra bitterly. "You speak as if you were going to the seashore, or to be married! What fixing is necessary? Anything does for a servant!"

"Not for such a servant as I intend to be," answered Harmony calmly. "I do not intend to lose a particle of dignity in this new occupation, and am going to keep as prettily dressed as I do here at home."

"How are you going to do it?"

"With my studio aprons," replied Harmony, who had evidently been thinking things out. "They have sleeves and are as long as my dress and have jolly little ruffles all around the bottom. By putting never-ending care upon my hands and on my hair

(poetry, Allegra!) I'm going to be presentable from morning till night, not to say *chic* and stylish. Why in the world are you all gazing at me so dolefully?"

"I educated you for something better than this, my dearie!" mourned Lady, tears on her lashes.

"And I'll take something better when it comes," promised Harmony gently. "But this is a case of emergency. Little as it is it means twenty dollars a month."

"Forty," croaked Gappy shrewdly.

"How do you figure that?"

"We'll give your room to the lodger."

"So you can," admitted Harmony rather blankly.

"Oh!" cried Lady, realizing her feelings. "We'll do nothing of the sort. We'll keep your room for you."

"No, indeed!" said Harmony, regaining her unselfishness. "Gappy has a good, sensible head on her shoulders. You must rent my room at once."

"Harmony," asked Allegra queerly—she had not been following the lodger question—"what are you going to do about the Edringtons?"

Lady's sympathetic face flushed as she looked pityingly at her second daughter. The Edringtons were wealthy and aristocratic people whose oldest girl and boy, Belle and Ted Edrington, had formed a romantically close friendship with Harmony, even making her a member and an officer of one of their bright little clubs, "The Good-Book Circle."

"I've already 'done' about the Edringtons," answered Harmony, also flushing a little. "I went to see Belle right after leaving Miss Mallory and told her all about—everything."

"What happened?" asked Gappy challengingly. "The Edringtons may live in the finest house in town and wear lovely things and have gone to Europe and take music lessons and give balls and own heaps

of money and drive pony carts and walk proud as you please, but they are not a bit better than you are or one-half as pretty, so there!"

"It's all right, Gappy," said Harmony, laughing in spite of herself at her small sister's flow of championship. "Belle was lovely to me, as she always is, and sensible, as always. She advised me to resign at once as secretary and member of the Book Club. 'And I did.'"

"You call that 'lovely' and 'sensible'?" flamed Gappy.

"Very. She told me that such a course would be independent and dignified and that she for one would insist upon my resignation being accepted. But—"

"But what? The cat!"

"Cat, nothing!" denied Harmony, trying to look shocked at Gappy's vehemence. "*But* that she would at once propose my name again and have me voted right back to membership."

"Then why resign at all?" demanded the puzzled Gappy.

"Because it might look presumptuous if I tried to stay in, while my resignation would create a—well—sort of sympathy for me and make them all the more my friends. I don't want sympathy, but I do want friends."

"I guess I see," sighed Gappy. "What a queer world this is; pretend you don't want something and everybody tries to make you take it!"

"That's it," said Harmony, again laughing at the child's fluency.

But Allegra hit upon a question which effectually killed Harmony's light-heartedness.

"I wonder," pondered the poetess dreamily, "if, when you are a *hired girl*, you will bow to Ted Edrington when you meet him on the street!"

Harmony went suddenly serious.

"Why not?" she faltered. But she knew.

Ted Edrington was a handsome lad, generally kindly and good-natured, but arrogantly proud of his family's high position and of the influence and distinction which it bestowed upon himself. His vanity was always apt to be just a length ahead of his courtesy. His liking for Harmony had been, probably, based very much on the fact that she bore herself with a distinguished prettiness which usually argues wealth.

"Gr-r-r!" growled Gappy, wild as a little terrier. "If I were you, Harmony Hall, I'd bake a batch of biscuits and lay in wait for that stuck-up Ted and if he didn't have sense enough to be proud of knowing a girl who was helping bring back her father's health I'd heave every last biscuit at his empty head."

This commaless tirade started Harmony to laughing again and carried them all past a situation which threatened to be unpleasant.

The family were rather in the habit of laughing at Gappy, not because her speeches were funny, but because her manner was. Her elfin face, pretty even now and bearing promise of real beauty, was so small compared with the large sentiments she usually flourished, her age was so much less than her quaint sagacity that the effect was certainly comic. Imagine a kitten arching a defiant back at a cow (which does not even know it is there) and you have a fairly correct picture of Gappy attacking the world. Her name was really Gillian. Surrey, the solemn, who was, nevertheless, given to nicknaming, called her Gappy because—well, as little girls whose teeth drop out are generally very sensitive about it, it would be unkind to go further into explanations.

It was Surrey who had named the little mother, Lady. He had calmly given her the title in his grave-eyed babyhood, and soon, because it fitted her very sweetly, the

others took it up and came to use no other word. And Lady liked it, too.

"Did Surrey have some tea?" was casually asked.

Nobody ever knew very much what Surrey did, had done, or happened to be doing. The lad was decidedly an outsider in the family conclaves. Poor, shy, stubborn, lonely, unhappy Surrey! His aloofness was certainly his own fault, but was none the less to be pitied. He thought, proudly and silently, that people did not understand him; had he been wiser he would have put half the blame on the fact that there was not much in him, yet awhile, *to* understand.

The sister who was his best friend was Harmony.

"I'll go and look for him," she now said. Ever since catching sight of his face as he left the room she had been anxious for a chance to follow him.

She went into the hall and called softly up the stairs:

"Surrey, are you there?"

Receiving no reply, and remembering his favorite haunt when he was moody, she went out into the yard to the barn. It was used as a general storehouse for the odds and ends which a family outgrows yet hates to part with. She found him in a far corner, his head downpressed and hidden in the saddle of a pathetically battered rocking-horse.

"Why, Surrey! brother—" she cried.

"Go away," he muttered roughly.

Then she knew that he was weeping; so she went in to him and stood quietly beside him. Her love reached out to him and wrapped about him, but she neither spoke to him nor touched him.

At last he raised his head and looked at her. Words came hard.

"I think I know," murmured Harmony.
"Yet you are not ashamed of what I have done?"



She found him in a far corner, his head hidden in the saddle of a battered rocking horse

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"I am ashamed. But not of you—of myself."

"Yourself, Surrey!"

"I am the man of the family, now, yet I am not man enough to save my sister from being a servant."

"It will not hurt me, dear."

"No, but it will hurt *me*. I won't have it, Harmony."

"Oh, but I must, now!"

"I know that. I mean that I won't have it for long. I'll work harder, Harmony."

"You are working as hard as you can!" she cried loyally.

"No, Harmony, I'm not. I have been careless. I hated it so—to be just an office boy. I have tried to do as little as I could. To-day they paid me—two dollars. They said it *should* be five to a boy who cared. I didn't care even then. But I care now. Harmony, I promise you it will be five next week. I promise you, Harmony!"

They had changed places. It was he who stood bravely upright, and she who was leaning against the friendly old toy, weeping.

"Father! father!" she sobbed incoherently.

The lines of worry deepened on Surrey's young face, but his voice was almost emotionless as he continued:

"I am not ashamed of what you are going to do, but I am going to stop it if you will let me. If I get to earning as much as your salary and mine put together will you come back home, Harmony?"

She wanted to press his hand in assent or to kiss him. But she knew better. So she flung up her head and smiled at him.

"I'll be glad to, Surrey; yes, dear."

"Then come in to supper," he concluded prosaically.

CHAPTER III

"I suppose I ought to feel crushed, but I don't," said Harmony to herself excitedly. "Instead, I feel like a North Pole explorer—just exactly. I'm chilly, but filled up to the brim with nobility. I'm lonely and frightened and exhilarated—North Pole all over. I'm in exile and my end is problematical—more North Pole. So this is being a servant! Well, it's more interesting even than I expected."

She was in Miss Mallory's third-floor back room, and was taking off and putting away her things preparatory to entering upon her duties downstairs.

"Well, if that isn't beautiful!" she continued, with a little gasp of happiness, as she looked out of her window and discovered the top of a tree. "Never before in

my life did I look down upon a tree! How cringing first-floor people must be—always looking up to things. I wonder if one of my eyebrows *is* shaped like a Z or if it's only the glass. A bureau all to myself. Riches! Nothing to put in the drawers, though. So much the better, all things considered. I won't have so much to keep tidy. And here's a shelf. Come out of that suitcase right away, Emerson, and get up on the shelf, and Thoreau, and Ruskin, and Longfellow. Gentlemen, I wouldn't travel without you for a gold mine."

Half hysterical with the strangeness of her position, the usually sedate Harmony chattered ceaselessly to herself as she suitably stowed away her few belongings.

"For a badge of infamy you're awfully pretty," she remarked lovingly to her long, blue apron as she shook it from its folds and breathlessly got into it, surveying herself in the mirror with an enforced approval. "These shoulder frills give me a

touchingly infantile air. Hope to goodness I don't say 'Ah, goo,' when Miss Mallory speaks to me! And she *will* be speaking to me, with a vengeance, if I don't hurry to the scene of action."

Slipping down the back stairs into her new kingdom, the kitchen, Harmony came face to face with Miss Mallory standing prim and expectant. Harmony had not had time to take the smiles out of her eyes and she, therefore, appeared before her mistress radiant as June, bright-haired, pink-checked, and wrapped around in blue frills.

This studio apron caught Miss Mallory's immediate attention.

"Outlandish garment," she rapped out sternly.

Harmony promptly started to unbutton it for removal.

"Stop!" ordered Miss Mallory.

Harmony stopped.

"Outlandish, but restful to the eye," said

Miss Mallory crossly. "Come through the house with me and I will outline your work for you."

The formidable old lady wheeled about and went toward the parlor, Harmony following.

"Aw, there, Smarty!" shrieked the parrot at her as she passed through the sitting-room, and she surreptitiously waved her hand at it in greeting. It danced wildly up and down, cocking its head invitingly.

"Where are the dogs?" thought Harmony, and even as she thought it they appeared, jumping from a velvet chair in the parlor and rushing at her in tumultuous welcome. One leaped for her right arm and one for her left, both yelping with desolation at her coolness, so that she was forced to stoop down and allow them to clamber into her embrace.

"Ham and Eggs," introduced Miss Mallory, briefly waving from dog to dog.

Harmony might have taken this for a

breakfast order had not each little dog given an embarrassed wiggle at the sound of its name.

"How do you tell Eggs from Ham?" she asked irrepressibly. The two black spaniels were counterparts.

"By the yoke," explained Miss Mallory, grimly pointing to two little billows of hair which decorated the neck of one dog.

"Yolk?" probed Harmony densely. Then, seeing that the hair looked something like a horse's collar, she understood. "Oh, *yoke!*" she exclaimed delightedly, going off into one of her irresistible ripples of laughter.

To have one's joke heartily laughed at is always a softening experience, and Miss Mallory lost some of her hardness of feature. But, according to her custom, as her heart mellowed her voice grew more and more forbidding.

"This room must be kept spotless," she

commanded harshly. "Speckless." It was hard work for Harmony to keep a straight face, for at each spluttering of s's the tiny dogs shivered painfully and closed their sensitive eyes. "That picture," she waved toward an oil painting, and Harmony's eyes obediently followed, "must never have a ray of sunlight fall upon it. Cracks the paint. That statuette"—here she waved toward a tiny marble figure so exquisitely beautiful that Harmony put the dogs right down and walked over to it, taking it up with an artist's appreciative, delighted fingers and studying it with brief but earnest devotion. She put the lovely thing down with a sigh of pleasure—"must never be touched," concluded Miss Mallory gruffly.

"Oh!" said Harmony apologetically. "It was so perfect I couldn't help it."

"The face is not pretty," observed Miss Mallory, waiting for a reply.

"No, it's beautiful," said Harmony.

Miss Mallory grunted. "And the pose does not tell any story," she continued, apparently depreciating her treasure.

"That's why I could look at it forever," cried Harmony enthusiastically. "If a statue tells a complete story all at once, one look is enough."

"Do you know the name of the figure?"

"No, Miss Mallory."

"'The Crown of Labor.'"

"Labor? Why, to be sure; she is standing on a strand of grain and has a sheaf of it in her arms. I never noticed. What is the crown of labor, I wonder?"

"The sheaf."

"Oh, no, Miss Mallory!"

"Why not?"

"If the sculptor meant no more than that would he not have carved just a sheaf of wheat and been done with it?"

"Don't know," snapped Miss Mallory. "Never was an artist."

"The crown of labor is in the girl's face.

See, she doesn't look tired at all! Restfulness! Peace! That's the crown of labor, don't you think?"

Miss Mallory gloomed into the new maid's excited countenance. "Hal" she said noncommittally. But she was evidently pleased, for her voice sawed like a file as she went on to give directions. "This room is to be dusted every morning and thoroughly swept every week. Preparation for sweeping must be very thorough. The curtains must be shaken and pinned, the chairs—oh, dear me, it is as much trouble to plan as to do!"

"Miss Mallory," suggested Harmony courteously, "I have taken care of mother's house for two or three years—might it not be easier for you if you let me look after yours in the same way?"

"Vastly!" boomed Miss Mallory, stalking out of the parlor.

Reaching the sitting-room she pointed to a case of books.

"These books are at the service of anyone in my house," she remarked.

"Thank you," said Harmony doubtfully. Her eye had caught sight of a row of pamphlets entitled "Therapeutic Suggestiveness," and she rather thought it would be a long while before she cared to read anything so queer sounding. Yet the time was to come when those very pamphlets were to give Harmony one of the ideas of her life.

"Aw, there!" begged the parrot, ducking up and down on its perch as if aching for attention, so Harmony gave it a friendly scratching of the head, which the bird took delightedly, screwing its neck first to one side then to the other, all the time crooning little words in an undertone.

Miss Mallory had turned pale.

"You are lucky still to have ten fingers," she stated. "You're the queerest girl!"

"Does the parrot bite?"

"Everything but me."

"And me," added Harmony, to herself.

"I believe in having the disagreeable things all come out at once," said Miss Mallory rather uncomfortably. "So I will tell you now that one of your daily duties is to take the dogs for an airing."

"Really?" said Harmony eagerly.

Miss Mallory snorted. "Do you mean to say you are pleased?"

"More than I can say. If those little beauties were mine I'd love nothing better than a chance to take a good run with them. But I wouldn't allow anyone else. I'm so glad you are going to trust me."

Miss Mallory studied her sharply for awhile.

"Do you make a point of trying to turn everything into a pleasure?" she demanded.

"No," disclaimed Harmony, rather embarrassed. "But I find everything pleasant. I don't know why. I can't help it."

"Do not let your inability worry you," advised Miss Mallory. She left the room and went upstairs.

This desertion showed Harmony that she was to hunt for her own work, which she promptly proceeded to do, going from room to room, dusting and arranging. She even went the lengths of invading the back garden and gathering flowers for the vases and the rose bowl on the dining-table. "If I do what is wrong she will be sure to tell me," argued Harmony, feeling reckless. "So I might as well go along until I'm stopped." The results of her labor showed so prettily that Harmony gravely gave herself some praise. "Harmony Hall, you are a perfect lady. It takes a perfect lady to make a good servant, I find."

Becoming thoroughly interested in the situation she put her mind to her work and was delighted to find that it exercised her intelligence. She early made a discovery that often takes longer than a lifetime to learn, and that is that competency wins dignity. Incompetency, even though coupled with the loftiest of mental sentiments, is

what gives the sting to servitude. She remembered the many difficulties she and her mother had had with maids in their employ and she used the remembrance to steer clear from the same faults herself. As the lunch hour drew near, or what she took to be the lunch hour, she determinedly set about ferreting out some provisions and arranging her own bill of fare, all without the asking of a question.

"Talk about exploring," she murmured nervously to herself, as she peered into strange places for pans and dishes, "the North Pole is tame to this!"

Having had a frugal training she soon had a meal prepared. This she set out attractively on the table and then looked around for some sort of a bell to ring. All she could see was a pagodalike set of Chinese gongs, swung in a doorway, and evidently intended for an ornament.

"High time they did something," thought

Harmony, as she took the silver mallet and ran a delicious chime.

"Step lively," nervously begged the parrot, treading restively at the unusual sound.

"I have," said Harmony severely. "I've been a treasure. She ought not to want to part with me in a month of Sundays."

"I don't," announced Miss Mallory. She was stiffly ensconced in a hall seat whence she had a full view of the dining-room. The burning red flew into Harmony's cheeks. Her acute distress won her more favor than she imagined, and Miss Mallory had the grace to say no more, but sat down at the table looking very twinkly eyed and amused.

Harmony stood tentatively beside the table ready to "wait."

Miss Mallory rolled her napkin into a spike and stabbed toward her.

"Go away," she said. "It would upset me to be watched while I was eating."

"Not as much as it would upset me to watch," confided Harmony to the kitchen sink. "She's very porcupiny."

Lunch over, Miss Mallory opened the kitchen door the merest crack, insinuated her long nose therein and said boomingly: "From two to four, rest. From four to five, dogs taken out. Six thirty, dinner." She closed the crack and was gone again.

"Nothing to do from two to four," mused Harmony. "I think I can stand that very well, indeed. It will need a good strong dose of Ruskin to counteract this dishwashing."

Her comment was entirely ironical, for the two or three pieces of china looked absurdly trivial to one who was used to clearing away the table service of a family of six, who always had a guest or two in addition. Every vestige of this midday meal was cleared from sight by one o'clock. From one to two Harmony planned her dinner and did all that was possible toward

its preparation. At two she ran thankfully upstairs to her tree-top nest, and settled down at her enchanted window for a good read. As she read with intense concentration one hour was all she could profitably spend upon a book. Harmony did nothing idly, not even her idling. The second and last hour of her leisure she devoted to making a scrupulously careful toilet.

Refreshed and dressed for the street she was quite as eager for the scheduled walk as were even Ham and Eggs, who, with scrupulous punctuality, were ready and waiting for her at the door. Each little dog held gingerly and reluctantly in its small pink mouth its own collar and strap.

"You infinitesimal darlings!" cried Harmony, sitting sociably down on the floor with them to adjust each harness. At her every word they dithered and wriggled with loving delight. They were tinier than cats and they constantly frisked, being excitable in temperament.

It was a trio thoroughly on good terms, each with the other, that set out for a walk that pleasant afternoon. Harmony was sorry her mother's house was so far away. She wanted much to take the little dogs there—to show them off. How crazy Gappy would go over them! As soon as thought, this terrible word "crazy," once so lightly used, hit Harmony like a whip. The sad picture came to her of her father, as she had left him that morning, playing childishly with some toys, nodding and waving a vacant farewell to her in mechanical response to her loving leavetaking. Her poor child-father, once so studious, so gently sane, so strong and manly!

The thought that she was doing something to help toward his recovery braced her to endure the unpleasantness of her present position. Not but what those unpleasantnesses were nearly all verbal ones; her work was not really different from the work she had been doing as a daughter in

her parents' home, but the words servant, maid, domestic, hired girl, each bore its bitter sting.

"I'd be servile in mind, though, if I let them sting me," decided Harmony, holding her head high in gentle pride as she walked along with the scurrying little dogs. "Marcus Aurelius says that no one but ourselves can hurt us, and he is right. If I let myself be worried by mere words it is all my own fault. A pretty sort of a daughter I'd be to think myself too good to work and to let my dearest dad suffer!"

"How do you do, Miss Harmony? I'm losing no time, as you see," said a shy, stiff voice, quite up in the air as regards its distance above her head.

Harmony had been so far away in thought that she had to blink at the tall speaker several times before recognizing him as Ernst Heller, the diffident, long-legged assistant of Dr. Cody.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Heller?

Catching a train?" affably asked she, glancing at his bundles and suitcase.

He grew red with embarrassment at having to explain what he had taken to be evident. "N-n-n-no, Miss Harmony! Going to live at your house, d-d-don't you know."

Going to live at her house! Why, to be sure. But *her* house no longer. She felt suddenly barred out. To-night in "her" house the lights would be lit, the curtains drawn, the world would be shut out and love would be shut in, warmth and quiet cheer and friendly chat would abound, perhaps a bit of music—for Ernst Heller sang beautifully—and she would be exiled from it all! Her heart sank like lead. She realized at last the full width of the chasm she had put between herself and her former life. Perhaps some of the dread shone in her frightened eyes, for Ernst Heller immediately dropped his suitcase and his numberless bundles in chaotic thumps to the pavement in order to grip her two hands

in his, his friendly grasp quite honestly regardless of the fact that each of her group of fingers held a strap to which an excitable little black spaniel was tethered.

"Now, l-l-look here, Harmony Hall," he stammered. "Don't g-g-give in one inch! You're acting like a t-t-t-trump. Immensely I admire your g-g-rit. And be assured of one thing—I'll make your father's case the study of my life. If it's to be the will of Providence to restore him I'll help your lovely mother to do it. There! I promise!"

"Thank you," said Harmony, shaking his hands violently. It was all she could trust herself to do or to say. "Thank you!"

Bravely smiling down the threatened tears, feeling comforted, complimented, and encouraged, she gave him a final furious shake and walked happily away, the little dogs tugging backward at a great rate, wanting to help pick up Ernst Heller's baggage, evidently.

"The world is full of friends; here are two more," said Harmony to herself.

Toward her were coming Ted Edrington and his baby brother, Benny. Supercilious Ted might be vain of his good looks and of his money, but he was never too arrogant to be playfellow to little Benny. Little Benny Edrington was solidly first in Ted's rather self-centered affections.

Delighted to see them, eager to show Ted as well as Benny the dog riches she had in tow, Harmony brightly hurried her pace and even waved a welcoming hand.

Ted's fair, handsome face was a mask of oblivion, his steel-blue eyes sought suddenly a store window. He bent down and said something to Benny, the child nodded, and both turned sharply into the store. Its door clapped to.

Whipped by indignation Harmony's cheeks grew burning. "Why, he couldn't have seen me!" she thought. But her good sense contradicted this.

She was a servant. Ted Edrington was—Ted Edrington. Her humiliation lasted less than a minute; her girl's pride came to her assistance. Her fortitude was strengthened, not assailed, by the episode.

"I'll make you sorry for this some day, Ted; very, very sorry!"

CHAPTER IV

Tea cake.

"My Waterloo," murmured Harmony, terrified. She could not make cake. Yet the brief instructions written by Miss Mallory on the kitchen slate called for that delicacy for tea.

Miss Mallory's one cook book was of fearful extravagance, asking for such trifles as twelve eggs, two pounds of butter, a gill of white wine—things like that. It was the despair of Harmony's life.

In this cake crisis she suddenly remembered the "Household Column" in a daily paper which, fortunately (or unfortunately), was taken by the establishment.

Hunting down its recipes through many a weary week she came across the article of her search—tea cake—and proceeded to get

her ingredients together, talking the while to the parrot. The parrot was always so frenziedly interested in her every move that she felt it hardly Christian not to talk.

"What do you suppose they mean by a lump of butter the size of an egg? Eggs are ostrichy and robiny. And a pinch of cinnamon. Am I to pinch economically, or pinch with a vim? 'A lump of lard as big as a nut.' What a frightful range! There are cocoanuts and hazel. A *dash* of vanilla. Why, this recipe is a joke. It must be. Yet it has the hardihood to label itself 'dainty and economical.' Well, here goes for the dash and the pinch, and may luck be merciful."

"Step lively!" counseled the bird, echoing the excitement in her tone.

"I'm stepping," answered Harmony.

Though she worked faithfully that cake was dreadful. Dainty? Too dainty to be eaten. Economical? Certainly. Econom-

ical enough to last forever if it hadn't been thrown away.

Harmony managed to scrape from the pan enough cake to serve (well drowned in a merciful sauce), eased her overburdened conscience by confessing the wasteful failure to Miss Mallory, then, before she went to bed, sat down in righteous indignation and wrote tragically to the editor, taxing him with publishing indefinite recipes, picking out the flaws in the one under consideration and winding up by rewriting that recipe for him so that a veritable baby could put the ingredients together and achieve an eatable success. This wrathful but courteous effusion she first signed by the skulking words, "*A Reader.*"

"Looks cowardly," she confessed, cocking her head dubiously. So she got a penful of ink and signed her full name and address, boldly and blackly. That done, she erased the affair from her forgiving memory.

As the days went on she learned how to

master her work instead of having it master her, and she became as intellectually interested as she used to over geometry at school. The kitchen, though, worried her with its ugliness. Miss Mallory was an unprogressive old lady and refused to see the necessity for a cheerful, pretty kitchen. So Harmony decided to see it for herself. The room was big and bright, owning many sunny windows, but the floor was hideous with well-worn linoleum, whose pattern, always frightful, in yellow and green circles, was now blurred into a nightmare of cracks, patches, and bald spots.

Standing it till—to use her own expression—“her soul erupted into sympathetic measles,” Harmony one day pried over a corner of it and was rejoiced to see that the reverse side was of a uniform dull red.

She turned it all! Those who are inclined to underestimate the labor of the performance, let such try it for themselves and be convinced. To struggle with yards and

yards of unyielding linoleum, to overcome its stubborn objection, and to coax it around a sink and a stove, to wheedle it around corners and under a refrigerator, to patch its yawnings is to realize to the full the meaning of "a herculean task."

"It took patience and an ax," confided Harmony afterward to Gappy.

The result paid for all the exertion, however, and when Harmony had trimmed the shelves with pale-blue paper, hung the windows with pale-blue sash curtains (cut from a discarded party dress), had covered the unsightly deal table with a dull-red cloth purloined from home, and had placed pots of ferns on the sills, she was in possession of a really beautiful room.

Miss Mallory surveyed the improvements with so lowering a frown that Harmony knew her to be charmed.

"Wouldn't you like a piano here?" she scoffed stabbingly. "And a sofa? And a few red and blue bows on the tea kettle?"

Harmony smiled seraphically.

"It's just the place for that abominable red wicker rocking-chair in the attic. Bring it down," she ordered angrily, and wheeled from the room.

Harmony airily kissed her hand after her in silent thanks, and flew up to the attic for the coveted chair. The last touch of comfort was added.

She tried to keep constantly busy, otherwise she worried about the affairs at her home. On her last visit there Surrey had told her that he had been advanced to four dollars a week, but he had told it without any exultation, seeming to be in dread of something. Questioning him she had found out that the poor lad was in daily fear of making a money error. "Maybe my head is like father's; not a business one," he said wearily. "But I'm going to keep at it, Harmony. When I get seven dollars a week you are coming home, you know. You promised. They wouldn't put me in

jail for one mistake, would they? Just one? I know I shall make it. It's hanging over me." She had tried to reason him out of his fear, but with small success. Poor little, tortured Surrey!

Whenever Harmony found herself thinking too sadly of things in general she turned her attention to the most disagreeable job she could find—this was the scouring of the pots and pans. She had queer methods of fortifying herself. It was not she who found them queer, though, but Miss Mal-lory.

"What's this?" demanded that lady, poking viciously at a piece of paper which was pinned to the kitchen wall.

"My motto for pot day," replied Harmony, who never evaded an issue.

"Motto! Pot day!" echoed the old lady, flinging the words like bullets, as she peered at the scrap and read: "'It is not work that kills, but worry. Worry is the rust on the blade.' Explain!"

"I hate worry and I hate pots. When I'm worried I take to pots, though, and the one counteracts the other. By the time I get the rust off the blades the worry's gone and the pans and knives look very shining and pretty."

"You are a bubbling young thing to have trouble," said Miss Mallory rather gently for her. "If ever I can help, tell me!"

"Why, thank you," said Harmony, her eyes queerly wet. "I will."

Miss Mallory made her usual jerky exit, and Harmony gathered every tin and steel article she could unearth, also the brick dust and some rags, and sat down to an hour or so of vehement rubbing.

She had not been long at her martyrdom when the back door opened to admit Gappy, who had come on a visit. She was in all the grandeur of her Sunday attire, notwithstanding which she turned up the skirt of her frock, hung a glove on each ear as the best means of preserving those valuable ar-

tibles from the brick dust, drew a chair up to the table, seized a pan, and began to help by polishing violently while she talked.

"Gappy, you're a love," said the cheered Harmony.

"I have much to tell you," confided Gappy, in the sepulchral tone which she adopted when the world's care and pleasures had become stale to her. "In the first place I'm dressed up because I've just come from giving a lesson."

"A lesson! You! In what?"

"Don't hurry me and make me nervous," advised Gappy squirming. "I'm 'sprised as you are about the lessons. You know this is the time in the school year when all the 'on-trial' pupils are put down to the lower grade if they can't keep up. So I advertised to give private lessons."

"How did you get the money to advertise?" blurted Harmony irrepressibly. Money was an unknown quantity at their home just at present.

"Well, that's interesting, too," drawled Gappy. "You remember the cow bank?"

"Empty months ago!"

"That's where we were mistaken. I smashed her, accidentally, and she had a fifty-cent piece lodged up in the empty wide part of her head where the horns began."

"No!"

"Yes. I had a stream of answers. Many of them were from high-school and grammar-grade pupils. Of course," regretfully, "I did not answer those, but I went to see all the little ones, and got five of them—an hour's lesson every two days—twenty-five cents an hour—that's about six dollars a week."

"Gappy, you darling!" exulted Harmony, her rag arm petrified with appreciation.

"If you can't gloat and rub, too, I'd better be going," commented Gappy sadly, which set Harmony back to labor. "The

six dollars won't last. They only take lessons for about a month; at the end of that time they either keep up and don't need you, or get put down and won't have you. Nothing lasts!" Gappy groaned this out dismally. Her knowledge of life forbade any illusions. But she was having a giddily good time over her recital. "And I've rented our barn."

"Gap!"

"Another advertisement from the same piece of cow. What was the use of a barn to us? The only horse we own trots around the kitchen with the family wash on its back. I got two nice, respectable people to take the barn—a widow scrub lady and her little boy. They give five dollars a month for it, empty. They brought their own furniture; mostly a stove and a bed. But five dollars is five dollars, and will mean a carriage ride for father."

"Well, you are a genius! But how did

you ever succeed in cleaning the place out for them?"

"I didn't. I called in a junkman and he carted the stuff away (Lady said he might) and gave us two dollars and five cents for it."

"Gappy, you financier, you take my breath away! You've done better than us all."

"The best job I did was getting a place in that nightgown choir."

"You never!"

"Yes. They call it a 'surplus' choir, I believe. I'm one of the surplus-es."

"Gappy, now you *are* joking!"

"Honor bright. I went to see the choir-master. He was very nice to me, but when I said that I wanted a salary he said that only the principals got a salary; so I told him I'd be a principal. He laughed. And then I got angry and told him that I could sing up higher than Elizabeth Peters, and

I began to sing. I went up as high as I could, and you know that's pretty high. He stopped laughing then and took me to the piano and struck notes and showed me how to open my mouth and where to put my tongue and a lot of things like that, and I sang easier and higher than ever. He said I had a fee—a fee something voice—

“Phenomenal!”

“That's it. A fee-nominal voice and that if I had a good ear and could carry a solo (isn't *carry* funny, there?) he would make me a member of the choir. So he played over an awfully queer tune, 'Angels Ever Bright and Fair,' one of those squealy, catawaully things, and I must have followed along pretty well for he said I could have a salary after all. The salary is a little less than the junkman, though—it's only two dollars. Two dollars a Sunday. And I'm to wear a nightgown with a black collar and a board hat. It's very becoming.”

"Gappy, you are the dearest little dear in the whole big world."

The sisters gravely bent across the table and kissed each other.

"I don't get on very well with the lodger," sighed Gappy.

"You mean Ernst Heller?"

"Yes; but 'Ernst' is hard to say; it makes a knot in the throat. So I call him the lodger."

"Why don't you get on with him?"

"He treats me like a little girl."

"Why, darling, what else are you?"

"I know I *am* one, but I don't want to be *treated* like one. There's Dr. Cody—he twinkles up his eyes and calls me 'Miss Gilian.' He's a perfect gentleman."

"And what does Mr. Heller call you?"

"'G-g-g-gappy.' But I must say he's good to Lady."

"The dear Lady! How is she?"

"She can't help but feel better. She

misses you every minute, but all the little bits of money coming in from the three of us help her to get nice things for father, so she's cheering up."

"And—and—father?"

"Just the same."

The girls bent their heads and worked for awhile in miserable silence.

"What about Allegra?" asked Harmony finally.

"Allegra is trying to fall in love with the lodger," mourned Gappy.

"Now, Gappy, that's foolish," gently reproved Harmony, referring to the speech.

"Very foolish," sighed Gappy, referring to Allegra. "Yet it has its good points, too, for she helps lots around the house now instead of waving her hair and inking her fingers and composing poetry which she sends to the magazines and gets back. He said once that he admired a d-d-omestic g-g-girl (meaning you) and Allegra's gone

around with a duster in her hand ever since. It will be a hard day for me when she leaves off being in love, for then I'll have *all* the work to do."

The door knob suddenly shook. "*Goodness me, let me have a look at this child!*" shot in Miss Mallory's voice.

She flung open the kitchen door and startled the sisters temporarily to stone.

Gappy recovered first, got up, shook down her skirt, removed her gloves from her ears, and politely offered her hand, which was taken.

"Miss Mallory, I guess. I knew from the—" Gappy swallowed discreetly. She just escaped saying "nose."

"What *is* your name?"

"Miss Gillian Hall."

Harmony all but choked.

"I've been listening," fired Miss Mallory, "from the dining-room to *every* word. How old *are* you?"

"Don't ask me," implored Gappy.

"Explain!"

"Why, when I tell my age people always say I'm too young to speak as I do, or else old enough to know better. I'm never just right."

"I thought I liked a parrot better than human beings, and a canary bird better than a parrot, and *you* are a canary bird and a parrot rolled into one."

"Ought I to say 'thank you'?" queried Gappy undecidedly.

"*Heavens* above, listen! I want you to come to see me. Often. Can you?"

"Oh, no!"

"*No?*"

"No. I'm very busy for one thing, and for another—"

"Proceed."

"—when I come here, to your house, I come to see Harmony."

The whole social problem was packed into the proud little sentence, and all three knew it.

Miss Mallory pivoted stiffly around and went out of the room.

"Is she offended?" whispered Harmony.

"She's too sensible for that," said Gappy. "I like her very much and I think she likes me. Well, I must be going, Harmony."

Harmony walked with her to the gate and stood a moment to ask anxiously: "And how does Surrey seem?"

Gappy grew anxious, too. "He worries me, Harmony. He's afraid he will be like—like—father because he doesn't sleep. Father began that way."

"And doesn't Surrey sleep?"

"Well, yes, he does. He lets me sit on the edge of his bed after he lies down and I talk to him—whole streaks—and before he knows it he drops off."

"Poor little brother! and good little sister to help him so! Good-by, Gappy, dear."

"Good-by, Harmony."

She went on up the street and Harmony lingered at the gate to find out if the ap-

proaching mailman had anything for her. He had.

The letter he gave her was addressed to "Mrs." Harmony Hall—addressed in type-writing, too.

Amused and mystified, Harmony opened it and a check fluttered out. Her knowledge of checks was gleaned chiefly from novels in whose pages they generally were of noble size. This unexpected one was a modest affair, worth three dollars, but Harmony beamed at it delightedly.

Now, who thought she was a "Mrs." and who should send her a check?

"It might not be a bad idea to read the letter and find out," Harmony informed herself dictatorially.

CHAPTER V

Of course, Harmony looked at the signature of the letter before she read the letter itself, and the looking helped her to very little else except the fact that the writer was named James Janway. Mr. James Janway commenced by saying that he was very much obliged to her for her long and friendly communication and was also very much amused by it. He went on to say that inasmuch as it had been signed by a pen name he had used it in the "Household Column" and had used her recipe as well. The accompanying check was payment for "the same" at the usual rates of the paper for such material.

The tea cake! Things began to explain themselves.

The continuation of Mr. James Janway's

note was the cream of the whole delicious affair—he admitted that the column had not been all that it should be, for the reason that he had found no one as yet willing to take charge of it and manage it conscientiously, the amount of payment which it yielded being very small indeed—being, in fact, but four dollars or so a week, and that he hardly hoped “Mrs.” Hall would care to devote her time to it, but if she would, then he should be very glad indeed, to put it into her charge. He wanted a quarter of a column daily, or half a column every two days, upon matters pertaining to the home and to the home table.

“To think that I scolded him three dollars’ worth!” Harmony said, in amazement. “Scolded a seraph like that! *Will* ‘Mrs.’ Hall take charge of that adorable column? Mrs. Hall will! And what is anguishing Mrs. Hall right now is that she has to wait till Thursday before talking the beautiful affair over with all the folks at home.

Won't their eyes bulge? Me to have a column! The affairs of the American family trusted to *me* whose cake has been a joke for years! Let Surrey call me 'cracked Hominy' *now*, if he dares!"

Her happy excitement died immediately as she recalled Surrey's doubts and fears. He was very much on her mind. All that day she could do little else but think of him and suffer with him, and when night came she found that she was too restless to sleep, too anxious to gain much diversion from the few familiar books she had in her room with her. She decided to borrow one from Miss Mallory's shelves. Not to disturb the quiet house she slipped down in the dark and took from the bookcase the first thing which chanced to come under her hand.

Regaining her own room she found that she had brought away an old issue of *Therapeutic Suggestiveness*, and she resolutely investigated it to find out what it was all about. That particular number con-

cerned itself with the mind in its relation to its control over the body. The argument was confined to a mere statement of facts relating to certain experiments which had been tried with people who were possessed of morbid fancies and fears. In reading these rather dry statements Harmony stumbled across a sentence which cemented her interest. This was the sentence:

"If parents and guardians could only be brought to realize the beneficent power for good they can exert over the young people in their care by merely talking to them reassuringly while they sleep, the conditions of childhood the world over would be miraculously benefited. The child, though apparently asleep, hears the spoken words and becomes imbued with belief in them. For instance, a child who is addicted to the making of unreliable statements may be led to habits of perfect uprightness. The one who speaks to him while he sleeps has but to tell him with quiet firmness that he

henceforth will have no desire to utter falsehoods, that the truth will serve him better, that his tongue will refuse to repeat anything but absolute facts. The suggestions must not be given negatively, but with positive affirmation. A change for the better will be noticed immediately. Sometimes but four or five days are necessary to effect a marked improvement, not infrequently a complete and lasting reformation. Fear of the dark, dread of lightning, etc., may all be overcome by this simple means."

"Therapeutic Suggestiveness" turned out to be only a very long way of saying "Healthy Thought." The longer Harmony read the greater became her belief in the sensibleness of the whole peculiar thing. Might not something, then, be done for Surrey? Gappy said that she was obliged to talk him to sleep—could it be possible for her to do more than this, to insure him not only sleep for the night, but contentment and peace for the day which

followed? At any rate, Harmony determined to put the matter to the test on the coming Thursday night when she would be at home. She forced herself to go right to sleep for the one and only purpose of bringing Thursday nearer. Her dreams were a weird mixture—she did nothing till dawn but tell sleeping people how to bake tea cake!

Her days now became pleasantly full of work, and she gathered all the materials she sent to the distant but delightful James Janway from the actual working problems which faced her from hour to hour.

She realized that she could leave Miss Mallory's, if she cared so to do and still earn enough money to help the dear home folks; but she made up her mind not to rob Surrey of the incentive which was spurring him. She need not tell him just yet that her "literary work" was worth coin of the realm; he would be enough astonished at

the remarkable fact that it was published at all, even as a gift.

"Ask your sister to come to see you oftener," ordered Miss Mallory, when Thursday came and Harmony was ready for her visit home. "And at which church is the extraordinary little magpie to sing?"

Harmony told, adding: "She sings with strange sweetness. I wish you could hear her."

"I intend to."

"Is there anything I can do for you before I leave, Miss Mallory?"

"No. Yes! This is *my* pot day. Give me a motto."

For one startled moment Harmony did not know whether the command was meant or not. She looked shyly into the old woman's face and saw there such weary loneliness that she dove right down into her facile memory and fished up one of her pet quotations. She gave it just as simply as

she would have offered a glass of water to some one athirst.

"'They never are alone who are accompanied by noble thoughts.' That's a very nice one, Miss Mallory."

"Go away," said Miss Mallory sharply.

Harmony went. "I wish to goodness," she mused as she wandered freely and happily homeward, "that she would ring a bell when somebody hits the spot. I never know whether I've cheered her or killed her dead."

"Oh, Harmony," was Allegra's greeting, "I know what happiness is. I am studying the sonnet form. Its difficulty is a constant tease to the imagination. I'm so glad you're here. You've got such a good memory. And I want a rhyme to 'summer.' I have 'mummer.' But I have to have two more."

"I offered 'plumber' and 'piano thumber,' but she scorns them," mentioned Gappy, aggrieved.

"When fair, shy spring turns ardently to summer," intoned Allegra.

"It's better for the ice man than the plumber," added Gappy kindly.

"You might try 'comer,'" threw in Harmony, skilfully averting a scrimmage.

"The flaming blossoms greet the sweet new comer," hazarded Allegra, still rapt.

"And worm-choked robins turn from dumb to dumber," persisted Gappy.

"What more do you want, Allegra? There's truth and poetry, too. Come upstairs, Harmony, and see Lady."

"Lady," cried Harmony, when she rushed into her mother's arms, "you look good enough to eat! What's helping you to look younger and younger?"

"Pride in my children," answered Lady tenderly.

"How is father?" ventured Harmony presently.

Lady sadly motioned to an inner room, and Harmony stole in to see him.

He was sitting at a table, pencil in hand, and was poring over some papers. The sight was momentarily so natural, recalling so truly his studious, gentle preoccupation, that Harmony's heart jumped with hope—a hope which quite died under the vacant, smiling look he soon turned upon her.

He held up the paper.

"An 'A' and a 'B,'" he babbled proudly. "The 'A' is a good little 'A' and stands up, but the 'B' is naughty and falls down. Would you think a small boy like me could make such a fine 'A'?"

"It's splendid," said Harmony softly.

He peered at her intently, a worried frown marking the effort he was making, as he asked anxiously:

"Aren't you the little girl who plays with strings?"

"Yes," answered Harmony, glad beyond measure that he could remember. She had interested him with "cat's cradle" on the day of her last visit and had noted thank-

fully that he had been able to concentrate his attention for several minutes upon the mazes of the cords. "I'm the one."

"Play some more," he wheedled, drawing from his pocket the same string. This, too, was a trivial circumstance, yet from it Harmony tried to build up her courage. His pitiful habit had been for many months to forget the whereabouts of an article that was not directly in his hands.

"Fix it the way I showed you," said Harmony, as casually as she could.

After a period of frowning indecision he finally brightened and slipped the string properly over his fingers.

For a quarter of an hour or more Harmony quietly entertained him, taking the pattern from his outstretched hands and showing him in his turn how to lift it back from hers.

"I grow tired very easily," he said, looking up at her thoughtfully. "And yet you rest me." His voice was perfectly modu-

lated, and again Harmony's heart leaped with hope. And again the hope was to die. For, "Ma," he cried, in sudden querulousness, "I'm sleepy."

Lady was there on the moment. "Go downstairs, Harmony," she murmured. "I'll be down soon. He'll be asleep very shortly. My big boy—my poor boy!"

After rejoining the girls Harmony insensibly cheered. Their companionship was what she needed. All three gathered sociably in the big sitting-room, which was dining-room and parlor as well, and began preparing the supper of their choice, which was tea, marmalade, and what Gappy called "stacks" of buttered toast. Allegra made the toast, sitting pensively and prettily on the floor, shielding her fair face from the fire glow with one hand and using the other to brown the bread on the end of a long English toasting fork. The occupation suited her, being not only inert but picturesque. Gappy went down on all

fours to butter the slices as they arrived. She chose the floor for her field of action because she claimed that its nearness to the fire made the butter "nice and squoggy."

"And have we callers at this late hour of the day?" she asked, rearing her small head like a caterpillar from the grass, to listen to a sound of wheels which stopped at their gate. "Wealthy ones, too?"

"Belle Edrington!" guessed Harmony, racing to the front door and soon returning with her friend.

"Well, everybody!" cried Belle heartily. "No, I can't sit down, not having a second to spare. I've dropped in just to have a look at Harmony and to leave a message with her, knowing that this was her afternoon out."

She spoke the last words unaffectedly, thereby rendering them oddly free from offense. She was a big, plain girl, magnificently dressed.

Gappy walked around and around her,

patting a bit of lace here, and petting a fold of velvet there.

"Oh, Belle," she breathed ecstatically, "when you come again do please make it a little earlier, so that it won't be dusk, and so the neighbors will see what gorgeous people call on us."

"Goose," said Belle, catching her and kissing her.

"Keep your feet out of the toast, Belle," advised Harmony nervously, "or we all go hungry to bed."

"I have just been talking to Dr. Cody, Harmony," said Belle. "He says he is very well satisfied with your father's condition; that the body is strengthening, and that the mind is less troubled; but that is not what I came especially to tell you. I want you to come to the book club. I have called a social meeting for next Thursday. We are going to discuss the current magazines. Each girl is to take a certain periodical and to talk about it. I want you on the pro-

gram. What magazine can you tell us about?"

"Therapeutic Suggestiveness," observed Harmony.

At the unwieldly syllables Allegra arched her delicate eyebrows and Gappy faintly fanned herself with the butter knife.

"It has a fearful sound," admitted Belle. "But that is rather in its favor. I'll put you down for it."

"No; don't," said Harmony, with unmistakable decision. "For I cannot come, Belle."

Belle looked at her reprovingly.

"Owing to false pride about the situation you are in?" she asked, with her usual outspokenness.

"Yes, and no," said Harmony firmly. "Please do not urge me to explain further just now, Belle, for I can't."

She could not tell the sister that the brother's rudeness had shut her from the

house where she was usually made so welcome.

"Very well," sighed Belle. "When you make Gibraltar Rock out of yourself, Harmony, a person had better leave you alone. Good-night."

While letting Belle out Harmony let Surrey in.

The boy walked wearily, flung his cap at a hook, and sank dejectedly into a chair. The brief smile with which he had greeted Harmony's presence faded at once. He huddled his shoulders up to his ears and bit unthinkingly at his finger-nails, if so the vestiges could be called.

"Here," said Harmony, substituting a piece of toast, "chew on that. How did things go to-day?"

"How do they ever go but wrong?" he queried hopelessly. "Oh, don't let's talk about it, Harmony. Talk of something else."

"Indeed I will," assented Harmony, with

a brightness she did not truly feel. "I'll talk about Mr. James Janway."

With much acting and nonsense Harmony told the whole tale, convulsing them with an account of her uneatable cake, and interesting them quite highly with the outlines of her own letter and of the editor's.

"And here's the check," she concluded, triumphantly waving it. "It comes in fine time to pay the water tax. Take it, Allegra, and apply it that way."

"Good for what's his name, Jim January," said Surrey listlessly.

Allegra seared the check with a gaze of magnificent sadness.

"What a world it is!" she observed, with tragic gloom. "When vulgar cookery can claim the wage denied to poesy."

"Wages! Poetry!" implored Gappy.

"And my cookery is refined, not vulgar," complacently remarked Harmony.

Here, for some mysterious reason, Allegra looked as winsome as possible and

drooped again in beautiful absorption beside the grate.

Gappy glanced at the clock. "Time for the lodger," she announced dryly.

Ernst Heller came in as breezily as a fresh wind. He nodded amiably all around and then strode thunderously to the foot of the stairs, up which he called ingratiatingly:

"Good-evening, Lady Hall. Please come down and tell me that it's a pity for me to go out to supper and that I may stay to yours."

Lady stole down smilingly. She always felt safer when this embryo young doctor appeared upon the scene. "Please stay to tea, Ernst!"

"I was g-g-g-going to," he said brazenly, but blushing.

They all sat down, and the supper that ensued was certainly cheerful, everybody talking at once. Ernst Heller had the biggest voice and oftenest made himself heard.

He praised the modest viands unstintingly and gave a didactic dissertation about the proper method of making tea so as to diminish the amount of tannic acid in it.

"Make a note of that for Jim January," whispered Gappy to Harmony.

After supper, when Lady was again upstairs, the girls and Ernst Heller gathered around the piano and sang quietly. Surrey trudged to his own room.

"The light makes me tired," he had said. "I'm going to lie down."

A little later Harmony relinquished her place as accompanist to Allegra, and buttonholed Ernst while she outlined to him the plan she wanted to experiment with upon Surrey.

"Self hypnotism—auto suggestion," he nodded understandingly. "May do good and can't do harm. Go ahead and t-t-try it."

Harmony beckoned to the willing Gappy and the two girls sought out Surrey, who

was lying down in his darkened room, tossing and turning restlessly.

"Hullo, poll parrots," he cried welcomingly. "Got anything new to tell a fellow?"

For about an hour they sat beside him and chatted, now on this thing, now on that, joking him, teasing him, making him laugh, making him angry, entertaining him, till finally his replies became fewer and fewer, and during the course of a long-winded exposition by Gappy upon the intricacies of choir practice he fell asleep.

Harmony took his hand, bent over him, and said evenly: "You are going to have an untroubled day at the store to-morrow, Surrey. Your work is quite satisfactory to your employers. You are good at figures and you are not to vex yourself with the idea that you will make mistakes. Your mind is perfectly strong. There is no insanity in the family. Father's state is the result of brain fever. You have nothing to

worry about. You are going to have a good night's sleep and you are to wake up in the morning refreshed and well. Good-night, Surrey; everything is all right."

Being sound asleep he did not answer, but his breathing was quiet and regular and his relaxed body had stopped jerking.

The two girls stole away, shaking with a suppressed fright and nervousness. Gappy, who, being emotional, rarely gave way to her emotions, crept weakly into Harmony's arms and stammered whisperingly:

"It's very spooky, Harmony, but if the lodger says it's all right, and if I can help Surrey, I'll do it every night if it wears me to skin and bone!"

Harmony hugged her silently. They went back into the sitting-room looking wide-eyed and pale.

"I'm afraid I must be going," groaned Harmony. The room was a happy sort of place.

“Lady Hall,” ordered Ernst, “you and the girls are to take Miss Harmony to her d-d-doom. I refuse. Moreover, you need the stroll. I’ll take good care of the father while you are out. Go, please; it’s doctor’s orders.”

CHAPTER VI

"Step lively," croaked the parrot, with frantic bobs of its head.

"Haven't you any name?" asked Harmony.

"Polly, Polly," it replied, with a weary falling inflection. It was in the kitchen with her, infinitely preferring her snatches of song, her flying movements, her bits of respectful conversation to the decorous retirement of the sitting-room. "Step lively."

This speech always indicated anxiety, the cause of which at this present moment was the arrival of Ham and Eggs, collar and strap in mouth, suggesting to Harmony that the time of delightful exercise had arrived.

"Quite ready, gentlemen," she said gravely.

In fact, she was more than ready, for she

had arranged with Gappy to call her up by telephone at a near-by drug store to tell her how Surrey seemed to be faring.

It was hard to be sure whether she led the dogs, or if the dogs led her, so energetically did they tug at their straps, racing along the street with their eyes fairly popping out of their small heads, gulping in happy draughts of the fresh air they so much craved. Harmony enjoyed it quite as highly as they, though more sedately. Many a weary-faced pedestrian brightened unconsciously at the sight of the radiant young girl and her jumping attendants.

Reaching the drug store she tethered them to a stool at the soda counter and then entered the telephone booth and made connections with Gappy.

"Hullo, Gillian!"

"Thank you, Harmony, for the Gillian. Hullo, Harmony!"

"How's Surrey?"

"Let me tell you. Last night he came

home, solemn as ever, and I asked him how he had gotten along and he said he hadn't bothered himself to find out."

"Oh," groaned Harmony.

"Isn't that lovely?"

"Lovely?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"Why, as a rule, he's so full of misery that it doesn't take him a second to say so. This time he said he hadn't bothered himself to find out."

"Why, I think you are right. Hurrah! Did you 'conjure' last night?"

"Yes. I like the lodger better. He didn't make fun. He told me a rigmarole about auto something-or-other—"

"Suggestion."

"That's it; and told me how to say the things. He's very sensible for a young man. We're all well and Belle's taken Lady out riding and Allegra's squeezing out blackheads and I have to sing 'As pants

the hart,' h-a-r-t without any e in it; isn't that funny? Good-by."

"Good-by."

So elated was she with her hopeful thoughts that after she had released her companions (who had wound themselves so tightly around the stool that they were almost strangled and were sneezing frightfully) and had taken them again upon the street Harmony was not as careful as she always was to seek a neighborhood where she was not likely to meet Ted Edrington, and she absent-mindedly walked herself right into one. And, as fortune would have it, there were Ted and his shadow, Benny, directly in the path of her swift approach.

Her heart tightened suddenly, for the truth is she had been, and was, very fond of Ted. Innocent and sweet minded though she was, Harmony was still girlish enough to have been subtly flattered by Ted's previous preference for her—after all, it is rather nice to be picked out for at-

tentions by the most distinguished lad in town—but his public slight had left her no choice but to pass him, unseeing, with proud little head in air. She had determined never to put herself in the path of this hateful necessity, and was, therefore, very distressed to see it confronting her.

She was too brave to think of evading the meeting by turning around, consequently she walked forward with an air of gentle unconcern which very much belied the distress at her heart.

The street was a wide and handsome one, asphalt paved, and its sidewalks were always thronged with pedestrians, as its stretch of smooth roadway was always lively with vehicles. Ted Edrington, with an assumption of unconsciousness, entered into close conversation with a friend of his, leaving small Benny momentarily to his own devices.

What happened was a nightmare for quickness and unexpectedness.

Rolling at frightful speed up the avenue came a huge motor car, whose chauffeur, lulled into false security by the apparently free course in front of him, had deliberately turned his head to talk to the people seated behind him.

Unwatched, little Benny walked from the sidewalk into the path of the oncoming monster. His tiny back was to it, and he was bending over trying to pick up some stick or stone with his chubby hand.

At the sudden shrieks of the bystanders Ted turned to see his idolized little brother straight in the track of dreadful death. There was apparently no time for anybody to lift a hand to help.

But Harmony never stopped to think if she had time for a thing or not. If it had to be done she generally did it quite regardless of consequences to herself.

Releasing her grip upon the straps she darted white-faced, into the road, clutched Benny's outstanding, starchy little kilts, and

flung him behind her. As for herself, she was struck by the car and hurled to the curb. The thundering thing rolled on, its whole party being absolutely unaware of the possible tragedy which had occurred.

An immense crowd gathered and the child and the girl were quickly ministered to. Except for being bruised and terrified little Benny was practically unhurt and was soon sobbing comfortably in Ted's shaking arms; but Harmony was partly stunned, and blood was flowing from a cut in her head where she had struck the edge of the curb.

"Is he all right? Is he all right?" she kept asking piteously.

So Ted carried Benny to her.

"You saved him, Harmony," he choked. The boy struggled for composure, but down his pale cheeks there crept the slow tears of his past anguish.

"I'm so glad," murmured Harmony, swaying upright. "I'm not hurt, either. Please find me Ham and Eggs."

"Poor crature, her wits is lavin' her," wailed a sympathetic woman. "Ham an' eggs for the likes av sich a head. Will yez listen!"

"Clear a space, please; here, Harmony," said a well-known voice.

Dr. Cody was elbowing his way through the crowd with scant ceremony, in his hands the straps confining the thoroughly entertained spaniels. He was so often the family angel that Harmony was hardly surprised to see him. But she put her trembling fingers in his right gladly.

Before she knew how she was in his closed carriage, and the excitement was over.

"To my office?" he asked, glancing at the slight cut. "Or home?"

"Neither," smiled Harmony. "To Miss Mallory's, and put me down at her corner, please, so that I shall not make a hubbub in that peaceful neighborhood."

"Have your own way," cheerily agreed he. "You'll live longer. Now, if you'll

kindly restrain these wild animals of yours, I'll apply some first aids to the injured."

In less than no time he had the cut attended to. It was quite like his sensible self that he asked her no questions about the affair, or her part in it, and would not allow her to talk about her father's condition. He merely insisted that she be quiet, and, as a consequence, he put her down upon the corner of her selection in as serene a state of mind as she had left it a scant hour ago.

Harmony never dreamed of seeing any heroism in what she had done, and for a truth she was very much inclined to be ashamed of it all on account of its horrible publicity; therefore, she told Miss Mallory nothing and went about her household duties in usual fashion.

Consequently, the next day when the doorbell rang and Harmony opened that portal to the majestic entrance of haughty Mrs. Edrington she was momentarily taken

aback to account for the lady's sudden embrace and fervent kiss. Mrs. Edrington had always been charming to her but never so effusive.

Harmony followed the swish of silk and velvet into the parlor.

"Please say you've come to see Miss Malory," begged Harmony.

"But I have not," announced Mrs. Edrington smiling. "I've come only to see you, and you know it."

"She's very lonely, and people don't call," sighed Harmony.

"You are a dangerous socialist," remarked Mrs. Edrington, nevertheless taking a card from her case. "But before you summon the ogress I want to tell you something."

What she told in the rush of her mother's gratitude is entirely too sacred to repeat.

Harmony found herself sobbing with her face on Mrs. Edrington's shoulder.

"Why, I love Benny, too!" she choked.

"What I did was nothing—nothing! How can you thank me!"

"I can't," whispered Mrs. Edrington, purposely misunderstanding. Her eyes, too, were wet. But generations of self-control stood her in good stead and she was able to speak composedly. "And, now, take up my card, and let me have the meeting over with."

"She's not as bad as that," championed Harmony gently.

"Maybe not; but all I shall do will be to tell her how much I think of you."

"In that case," said Harmony, looking wonderfully gratified, "I had better not come back into the parlor, so good-by, dear Mrs. Edrington."

The flattered incredulity which appeared on Miss Mallory's pinched old face as she caught sight of Mrs. Edrington's printed name quite touched Harmony, especially when she added, almost timidly: "Child, would you fix my collar?"

Of course, Harmony would! "Haven't you any fluffy business, Miss Mallory, for your shoulders?"

"Fluf-fy business?"

Harmony was too interested in her new trade of beautifier to be frightened. "Fluffy business?" she repeated coaxingly.

"Would you call a zephyr scarf a fluf-fy business?" hissed Miss Mallory.

"I certainly should," said Harmony, relieved. Draping the airy folds about her passive charge Harmony sped her forth with the comforting assurance: "You look a dream!"

And Miss Mallory meekly let the slang go unchallenged.

The resulting interview was not very long, but it must have been managed with Mrs. Edrington's most winning tact, for after she had gone Miss Mallory sharply summoned Harmony into the parlor.

Harmony went, quaking in her shoes. The voice had been all but murderous,



“Would you call a zephyr scarf a ‘fluf-fy business’?”
hissed Miss Mallory

"Come here," ordered Miss Mallory. "Take this!" Into Harmony's hand she prodded the exquisite statuette of the girl with the sheaves.

Harmony obediently grasped it.

"What am I to do with it?" she asked, needing instructions.

"Keep it!" barked Miss Mallory.

"Keep it?" stammered Harmony, honestly obtuse. "Where?"

"In the ice box if you want," said Miss Mallory impatiently. "I give it to you."

"Not this lovely thing!" cried Harmony.

"Why not?" fairly bellowed Miss Mallory. The affair had symptoms of becoming dangerous.

"Oh, Miss Mallory!" gasped Harmony, forced to understand, and the beautiful color rushed sensitively over her face. "It's the most valuable thing you own!"

"And, therefore, fit to be offered."

Harmony flew at her and hugged her.

Miss Mallory was as unresponsive as a battle-ax but her eyes glistened.

"Go away," she ordered. "You disarrange my—fluffy business. Go away, I say. Stop being outlandish."

"Please excuse me," demurely murmured Harmony.

She sped away to her room in order to house her treasure safely, and then she entered upon such a campaign of cleaning and cooking as a valve for her steam that Miss Mallory's residence not only shone as the sun and her table groaned with good things, but Harmony's notebook became stuffed with fascinatingly interesting items for the household column belonging to Mr. "Jim January."

Incidentally, he had promised to call upon her on the occasion of his next visit to the town! Poor Harmony had one frantic qualm of mortification. Most naturally she ached to receive this editor, this real live editor who had been so kind to

her, in the seclusion of her own home, where she could play the willing hostess, and where she could offer him some of the slight but sincere hospitality that Lady was always so delighted to provide. But—to meet him as a servant!—to usher him into a kitchen! Here Harmony's saving grace of fun came to her aid and she broke down into nervous laughter. She resigned herself to her fate, philosophically concluding that as she could not change the affairs of the world she might as well take them as they came!

This was very much her nature—to be serene and sweet tempered—yet the time is now come to chronicle a fearful falling from grace, to tell of an occasion upon which her gentleness suddenly deserted her, turning her into a veritable little flame of fury.

It happened on a Sunday, too. Everything had gone very beautifully. The day had even had its unexpected surprise, for

Miss Mallory had come back from church with the remark: "I have heard the mag-piel!"

"Gillian?"

"Gillian. And tell her, please, from me, that I must see her soon on a matter of possible importance to us both."

This had been gorgeously mysterious, and when afternoon came and Harmony was on her way to her mother's house her mind was in tune for anything but tumult.

Even when she unexpectedly met Ted Edrington she was too good-humored to carry any resentment in her heart and she therefore accepted with sincere liking his offered hand.

He raised his cap with stiff deference, and his handsome face was a queer mixture of pride and embarrassment. He was struggling with something he wanted to say, and yet did not want to say.

"May I walk along with you?" he temporized formally.

"Why, certainly," said Harmony, who was hampered with no "manners" save those which came straight from her true little heart.

They walked on together, both a trifle nervous.

"It is impossible," he said at length, "for me to try to express my gratitude for the sense of indebtedness you have laid upon me—"

"Then why do it?" she countered sharply. There was something artificial about his words that jarred terribly upon her ears.

"Because it must be done," he said, attempting a dignity which did not sit very easily upon him.

"Well, if it must," she said flippantly, "go ahead."

"I wish you would not make things hard for me," he commented gloomily.

"Oh, Ted, what is it!" she said, in impatient yet friendly way.

"I owe you an apology—" he began. The whole wretched rudeness of which he had been guilty was recalled by the wavering of his glance.

"No, you do not," said Harmony decisively, not wanting to have the matter dragged out again.

"I owe you an apology," he persisted a trifle loftily, "and I am not afraid to make it. I ask you to pardon me for my unmannerly refusal to recognize you in the street—one day—quite awhile ago—"

He waited for her to stop him, or to accept his amends, but she was uncomfortably silent. She felt truly that he was but making a sorry matter worse by needlessly harping upon it.

"To show the sincerity of my gratitude for the unspeakably great service you did me—saving my little Ben—"

Here Harmony wheeled around upon him rather sharply.

"If you flatter yourself that I thought of

you when I grabbed that dear little baby you are mightily mistaken, Ted."

"To show the sincerity of my gratitude," he went on laboriously—he had evidently made up his mind what to say and was determined to say it—"to do something to prove how much I esteem you, no matter how you have undertaken to earn your living, as an offset to the discourtesy I showed you, I ask you if you will please let me call at the house where you are to-morrow evening and take you to the theater."

Harmony gave him a puzzled little stare.

"Say it again, Ted," she suggested ominously. "I want to be sure that I understand."

"To show the sincerity of my gratitude," he repeated—and he painstakingly went through with the statement a second time.

"Stop," said Harmony, her great eyes flashing. "Stand still."

A trifle disconcerted by her evident anger Ted obeyed with exemplary fidelity.

"Let me put what you have said into plain English," said Harmony, so exercised by fury that her words fairly galloped along. "You have hinted that because I took a servant's position I was not fit for you to bow to in the street. Do not you dare to interrupt me till I get through! But because I saved your baby brother from being killed you would pay me for it by giving me the honor of being seen in public with you."

"Harmony!" he begged, his face as red as if she had struck him.

"It has a nice sound, hasn't it? Go to the theater with you! Why—why—why—there's an untidy, red-headed, ungrammatical butcher boy who serves us, Ted, and if he asked me to go I'd be delighted, not that I'd go, but I'd be delighted, knowing that he intended to have me honor him by accepting his invitation; while as for you, you have an idea that you are the one bestowing the honor. Honor? Why, I'd be awfully

sorry to have the ideas of honor that you have. Go to the theater with you, Ted? No, thank you! Not on such an invitation. Before I'd go to the theater with you, Ted Edrington, you'd have to get down on your knees!"

"Harmony, let me explain," he urged broken-heartedly.

"You've explained more than enough for one day," she said, still hotly furious. "Don't attempt to come with me. Good-day, Ted, and good-by!"

CHAPTER VII

As is always the case, Harmony found out that her own ill-manners to Ted worried her far more than his to her, and she cried many tears in secret. The top of the tree was a big comfort to her at such times. It tapped against her window-pane, swayed gracefully by rough winds, and looked so strong and cheerful, so unvexed by buffetings, that she whimsically decided to copy it.

Motto—For universal pot-day: Be a tree.

This cryptic inscription she pinned upon her wall in her own room. She did not dare invite it down into the kitchen, for she knew that she would find it quite impossible to explain to Miss Mallory, when that long-nosed lady ferreted it out, as she would be sure to do.

Gappy had received her commands to visit her, concerning the matter of "importance to them both," and had sent back by Harmony a sadly polite message to the effect that she would do so "when her business engagements allowed."

"Gappy, that has a funny sound," had been Harmony's dubious comment, her eyes dancing with amusement at the contrast between the smallness of the child and the bigness of the excuse.

"It is the truth," Gappy had sighed. "And the truth always has a funny sound. Miss Mallory won't mind."

And Miss Mallory had not. "She's a bird of the air. And she has to fly around just so much before she'll perch on the hand and peck crumbs," said the old lady tartly.

"And sometimes," said Harmony, politely extending the parable, "when it makes up its mind to perch, the crumbs are gone."

"And sometimes," spluttered Miss Mal-

lory, rising to a climax, "there are more crumbs than there were at first!"

Harmony ducked discreetly from the room, wanting much to laugh at the old lady's fierceness, yet touched, too, by her evident championship of Gillian's meek independence. Passing the shelves of *Therapeutic Suggestiveness* Harmony kissed her thankful hand in their direction.

That Surrey was in a safer frame of mind was more than evident. On each visit home Harmony found him less full of fears, less inclined to make a bugbear of his duties. The change, though pleasing in one way, was saddening in another, for the boy was very unboylike in his quiet devotion to the business cares thrust upon him. He never jumped, whistled, or ran, as other boys do, seeming to have lost forever the playtime of his youth.

Quite according to her sensible custom, the more Harmony felt inclined to worry, the harder she worked. Under stress of

this new anxiety concerning her brother she turned Miss Mallory's house fairly out of window in her housewifely activity.

One day she attacked the parlor and soon made pandemonium out of it, sunning its cushions, airing its rugs, letting wild winds circulate into its corners from upflung, uncurtained windows. Out of one of them Harmony herself was hanging, an innocent rug flapping vehemently from her hands.

Harmony's blue sleeves were rolled up to her elbows, her hair was shrouded in a dust cap, her dress skirt was pinned severely around her waist. In the language of girlhood, she was "a sight"; but to the eyes of maturity she was a sight extremely nice—a busy, contented, capable little sight, neat as a pin in spite of unconventional attire.

Down the street bowled an automobile, a vehicle which was quite unloved by her since the terrible day of Benny's peril.

"Don't you dare to stop at our door!" she gasped aloud.

Her inhospitality being wholly mental made no impression upon the callous machine. It checked itself at Miss Mallory's carriage stone, and choked and hiccoughed and carried on awfully with impatience to be gone again.

From it alighted a rather portly middle-aged gentleman of an imposing bearing and very kindly countenance. He came up the walk and rang the bell. Harmony opened the door.

"Does Mrs. Hall live here?" he asked.

"No," replied Harmony courteously, and, as she thought, truly.

"A writer?" he persisted.

"Oh, no," said Harmony. She shook her head. This brought the dust cap over her eyes, so she removed it.

"Mrs. Harmony Hall?" frowned the seeker.

"Oh, my goodness, yes!" said Harmony. (Jim January!) "Do you want to come in?"

"If I may be permitted," he said dryly. He plainly had doubts of her intelligence. The doubts were short-lived, though, disappearing under the sincerity of her somewhat tardy welcome.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Janway," she said very simply.

His hat was off in a twinkling and he was bowing. But the pinned-up skirt, the elbows, and the blue-ruffled apron were interesting him. He could not quite make things out.

"Please come in," invited Harmony, leading the way.

He passed the open and hurricany parlor, not expecting, of course, to be asked to join *that* chaos; he lingered rather expectantly in the reception-hall, but followed Harmony into the sitting-room. As she stalked remorselessly past its comfortable chairs he perforce did the same. In the dining-room he naturally expected to make an end of his long pilgrimage. But not Harmony.

With gentle friendliness, she beckoned him gravely into the kitchen and waved him politely toward the rocker. Just as politely he waved it back into her own possession and tentatively laid his hand upon the railing of the wooden chair.

Before sitting down she took the pin from her skirt, shook it to where it belonged, pulled her sleeves to her wrists, and gave herself one tidy wriggle from top to toe. Then she sighed and sat down. Disclosures were imminent.

He gazed at his hat thoughtfully, glanced around for inspiration, saw none, and heroically put the hat on the kitchen table.

He sat down and leaned quite forward. Noting the extreme youthfulness of her face, the immaturity of her soft voice, the shy sweetness of her little social gestures, he said earnestly:

"It can't possibly be 'Mrs.' Hall. It is 'Miss' Hall, I am sure."

"Not even 'Miss'," acknowledged she, thinking it over. "Miss Hall is Allegra, my sister. She is at home, not here. I'm only Harmony, I fancy."

"'At home'? This then is not your home?"

"Oh, no!" Another vigorous head shake. "This is where I work."

"'Work'?" he repeated dubiously. He seemed puzzled and able only to repeat her own words. "Work. May I ask—at what?"

Harmony motioned with her hand affably but vaguely toward the sink, the stove, the pantry, and the unguessed beyond of the floors above.

"Housework," she explained.

His eyes had followed her graceful calisthenics with no little astonishment.

Remembering the grammatical, even cultured, compactness of her literary work, recognizing the unmistakable evidences of


good breeding and good manners in her voice and movements, he leaned a little further forward and said ingratiatingly:

"I find myself interested and curious; could you tell me the whole story?"

There are some people who are so full of understanding, so big and charitable of heart, so frankly genial of manner that one seems to have known them for a lifetime, even at the first moment of meeting. This was the way of "Jim January."

And there are some people so trustworthy that they trust all the world, so gently dignified that they never have to bother over their dignity, so open-minded that they have nothing to conceal. And this was the way of Harmony Hall.

Consequently, before she had time to think about it, Harmony found herself telling this new friend every solitary thing from the first beginning of her father's illness straight on down to the present, ending with her constant anxiety concerning the



small boy brother who was trying to accomplish a man's work.

Comprehending nods from the quick-brained listener made a kindly style of punctuation for the otherwise breathless tale. He seemed not only to be following the recital of Harmony's problems but to be seeking to solve them as she went along. When she wound up with a little wail for Surrey's unchildishness, he said positively:

"What's the matter with him is too much sister!"

"Oh, Mr. Janway!" rebelled she.

"Nothing is better for a boy than to have the society of girls; nothing is worse for a boy than not to have the society of boys," he maintained, not backing down an inch.

"Oh—that!"

"Yes, and I can remedy it. With your mother's permission I can remedy it at once."

"Oh, how?" exclaimed Harmony, but not

with doubtfulness; there positively was no doubting the forceful helpfulness of this surprising Jim January.

"Well, I am father to four of the worst boys in America," he said proudly. "There is nothing too bad for them to think of and nothing they think of they can't manage to do."

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Harmony, getting excited.

"We live just outside of the town, and I am going to coax your mother to let me take this dismal small Surrey of yours home with me this very night; my man can come and go for him, morning and evening, with the machine, and between dusk and dawn if my four boys can't knock a little natural, healthy, necessary badness into him, then I don't know them as intimately as I'm sure I do!"

"Oh, Mr. January!" gasped Harmony, delighted. Neither of them noticed the slip.

"As for the firm with whom he is employed, I am going to see them, too, knowing them very well. Our house does all their publishing. If there's any advancement in sight for your brother I'll try to hurry it along."

"Oh, Mr. Janway!" Her glowing face made up for any lack of variety in her exclamations.

"And now about the Household Column. I am expanding it into a page, for the Saturday issue, enlarging its scope somewhat, and allowing for bits of verse, good anecdotes, short stories, either original, contributed, or clipped from contemporaries. It will pay only ten dollars a week, but even at that figure it might be worth your while to devote your time to it and give up this, your other—work." He calisthenicked in his turn politely and vaguely toward the sink.

"Oh, Mr. Janway!" The words were always the same but this time Harmony's

drooped head indicated that she had fears he had invented the new page out of pure philanthropy, resulting from her tale of woes.

He was quick to see this, too.

"The object of my visit to-day was to inform you of the change in the Household Department and to see if you were capable of taking hold of it."

"Am I?" asked Harmony nervously.

"Would you like to be?"

"Very much."

"Then you are."

"Oh, Mr. Janway!"

Their heads were soon together over the kitchen table, he outlining his wishes from a dictatorial notebook, she chronicling them into a meek and obedient notebook.

Fascinating though it all was, yet Harmony's honest faithfulness to her less-liked duties caused her to jump to her feet when a town whistle blew and thereby informed her of the time.

"Lunch!" she exclaimed. "I have to get it ready and I can't ask you to stay!"

"Which, interpreted, means that I am requested to go," he remarked, imperturbably. "But, seriously, Miss Harmony, do you not think it would be now practical and right for you to give this situation up?"

Then she told him hesitatingly, but sweetly, of her wish not to deprive Surrey of the hope toward which he was working. Her tones were faltering and her sentences were broken, but bit by bit he gathered from them the story of her unselfish devotion and Surrey's, too.

"I see. Very well. Yes," he said shortly. Harmony's eyes were shining with tears. Surrey was always very close to her heart. James Janway's went out to them both. He shook hands very much more than was necessary when he took leave of her at the door.

So elated, not to say inflated, was Harmony that it is a great wonder that lunch


was not served upside down from start to finish!

For almost the first time she chafed terribly against the restraints which kept her working at Miss Mallory's when she ached to be at home watching the progress of the new events.

The days, though, did not drag; indeed, they fairly raced along, so full of work they were, and so full, too, of cheer and hope. She learned immediately by letter that Surrey had gone home with their new-found friend, and she learned gradually, through the medium of her brief visits to her own house, that the change was doing him a world of good.

At the end of three weeks, when Surrey's country sojourn was over, Harmony called up Gappy at the drug store, according to previous arrangement.

The following conversation took place, while Ham and Eggs choked themselves, quite as before.



"Hullo, Gillian!"

"Thank you, Harmony; hullo, Harmony!"

"How's father?"

"Very quiet. Not a bit of trouble. Eats more and sleeps less."

"And how's Lady?"

"Lady's lovely. She laughed yesterday. She really did."

"What at?"

"It would sound vain for me to tell you, Harmony; don't ask. But it was funny."

Harmony giggled into the receiver.

"And how's Allegra?"

"Awful. She's got from sonnets to triolets."

"To what?"

"Triolets. Do you know anything about them?"

"No."

"That's good. I wish I didn't either. Triolets is saying nothing three times over. It's very hard on the toast. Allegra burns

every slice now. I wish she stayed on sonnets."

"Is Surrey home again?"

"Yes; he came last night."

"Is he improved?"

"Well, he never hangs his cap up any more, he throws it on a picture frame and howls when it sticks; and he isn't quiet, he sings some fearful songs; and he puts whole apples into his mouth and chokes till you go to send for a doctor, then he pulls the apple out of his pocket, where it has been all the time. I bring a dirty surplice home every week and he puts it on hindersidebefore and does acrobatics in it from the transom. He tickles me when I'm carrying a pitcher of water. He pins Allegra's dress to the supper table so that when she gets up the supper gets up, too. He's so dreadful to live with that I guess he's awfully improved. Good-by Harmony!"

"Isn't it lovely? Good-by Gillian!"

Rescuing Ham and Eggs, Harmony

floated back to her work as if on wings. Gappy's tiny voice coming over the wire, clear and fairylike, had carried reassurance in every word.

"Aw, there?" besought the parrot, when she reappeared before it. "Smarty. Aw, there, Smarty, Smarty, Smar—"

The rest of it was swallowed in gratitude for the head scratching which Harmony administered. Harmony was wrestling over a stubborn half column which refused to be filled—till the parrot helped her out.

"Polly, you duck," she apostrophized happily, "I'll make you into a thousand words. Ham and Eggs, I'll make you into another thousand. I'll make the canary into another thousand!"

And thus quite by chance did Harmony hit upon what was to become a valued feature of the Household Page—"The Care of Domestic Pets." Harmony capitalized it in her delighted head even before she had written a line. Her comfortable gift of

making the best of what was close at hand, instead of yearning for impossible things afar off, was as valuable to Harmony in her literary life as it was in her domestic life. She never would be one to wander drearily over the earth in search of the four-leaved clover which grew in the metaphorical potato patch at home.

The Nest—for so she styled her tree-top apartment—became a veritable editorial sanctum, beautifully littered with papers and charmingly cluttered with books. She was able to do a great deal of work in it, not only during the long evenings, but in the two afternoon hours which she had to herself.

One day, in the middle of these two precious hours, while she was cutting “cuts” down from two thousand words to a thousand (and it takes twice as long to write one thousand words as it does to write two thousand, or even three), the door bell rang with extra viciousness.

"Step lively!" shrieked the parrot from below.

Flying downstairs to the door Harmony opened it to a telegraph boy.

Harmony's heart sank, even though the sinking was for the lady of the house.

"Mallory?" she questioned, reaching out for the sinister looking yellow envelope.

"Naw," said the boy, attempting to draw it back. "Hall."

"For me?" whispered Harmony, signing the book with trembling fingers. She let the boy go, even before knowing whether or not the message required an answer.

Ripping out the sheet she read these four unexplained words:

"Come home at once."

CHAPTER VIII

To skim fleetly to Miss Mallory's bedroom door and knock nervously for admittance was poor, troubled Harmony's first conscious move.

"Come!" was Miss Mallory's characteristic reply, she ever refusing to use two words where one would do. Ham and Eggs, who were with her, added a bark apiece quite in the same tone and with equal brevity.

"Yap!" barked Ham, who was of the placider temperament.

"Yikel!" shrieked Eggs, who was enthusiastic. He jumped out of his mistress' lap and fussily bit and mouthed at his street strap, which was dangling invitationally from a table.

"Twenty minutes"—began Miss Mallory,

glancing accusingly at the clock as Harmony entered—"too soon!"

Ham dithered all over with the peaceful knowledge that he did not have to get up yet, but Eggs, like all enthusiasts, was hard to discourage and pointedly laid his strap at Harmony's feet.

Harmony's dazed eyes also sought the clock. How long would it take her to get home, was the frightened thought.

"I did not come to take the doggies for their airing," she said, stooping down to recover the strap from Eggs and replace it upon the table. Harmony's orderliness was of the stanch type, which it took more than mental disturbance to destroy.

"Why, then," shot off Miss Mallory, "the hat?!"

"Hat?" echoed Harmony.

"Hat! Yes, hat! Yours."

Harmony's hand went to her head. "I did not know I had it on," she stammered blankly.

"Child, what is the trouble?" asked Miss Mallory with sudden softness, the white, strained face of her young maid carrying its story to her at last.

"I don't quite know," said Harmony, trembling. She found it easier to be self-controlled when Miss Mallory snapped. "They say 'Come home at once.' May I?" She tendered her telegram in explanation.

Miss Mallory calmly put on her glasses and read it. Then she turned into a cyclone again.

"Be off!" she literally shrieked. "Stop wasting time!"

"Thank you," said Harmony, starting to go. But the humbleness of her thanks had a misleading sound, which she felt in common honesty bound to rectify. "But, I'd have gone anyhow, Miss Mallory, you know," she stopped a moment to say. She spoke unfalteringly, but as if distressed by the necessity.

"Go!" said Miss Mallory, adding, under her breath: "Poor child!"

Harmony was soon hurrying homeward, and though her feet fairly flew over the pavement they lagged most heavily behind her leaping thoughts, which reached the house before her and fought for entrance, wild to know the real state of affairs. Was Lady sick?—dear little Lady. Had Surrey made that money error he so used to dread; was he arrested—in prison? Had Gappy broken her arm again? (It was quite ten months since little Gappy, with the pipe-stem limbs, had broken one of them, and a fracture was consistently due.) Or had father?—

At this last vague terror Harmony, who had now reached her house, hung feebly to the door knob before really daring to enter.

"Always do what you are afraid to do," said Harmony sternly to herself, and turned the handle.

She entered upon a peaceful scene—

Gappy and Allegra socially together in the sitting-room, Allegra gotten up in becoming Sappho-like draperies, a black velvet fillet around her sunny hair, ink on her fingers, rhapsody in her eyes, a pad of paper on her knee, and Gappy, shrimp small and elfin as ever, her thin legs wound snakily around and around the piano stool, three times if once, picking out the air of her Sunday solo and crooning it forth in tones as fine and sweet and rare as a miracle.

"Goodness, what's the matter?" asked Allegra, so surprised at Harmony's unexpected appearance as to drop a blot from her pen onto a place where she least wanted it. This blot she removed upon her finger and then rubbed disposingly into her velvet fillet. Allegra's bump of neatness was peculiarly her own. It even excited no remark, any more.

"What is the matter?" implored Harmony.

"What's the matter?" asked Gappy,

blinking in perfect time to the notes she still played.

"While we are making up our minds," said Allegra ingratiatingly, "don't you want to hear this—er—this villanella? It's got a *l'envoi*. I don't quite know what a *l'envoi* is, but it's effective. It's called 'I Kissed, Ah, Kissed Her 'Neath the Mistle-toe'—"

"Then don't gabble about it afterward," admonished Harmony shortly. "Won't anybody tell me what's the matter? Gappy, you're the lucid one, you tell."

"Why, nothing at all's the matter, Harmony, dear; stop looking as if you expected a board to fly up. Everything is as usual. I, of course, have my private calamities, as who hasn't? This calamity is my last pupil, my very last, and I've lost him; but, on the whole, it's a good thing I lost him now instead of later, for he never paid me a cent, so the sooner he became lost to me the better off I was. Even I can see that.

But a loss is a loss, and my income is stopped."

"Is Lady all right?"

"Never sweeter. She's fluffed her hair once or twice lately, just as if she cared to live again."

"Surrey?"

"Healthy as a goat and twice as ractory."

"And—and—father?"

"He's—he's—all right."

"I don't smell smoke, do I?" asked Harmony, sniffing desperately, bent on ferreting out the matter on her mind. "Has the place been on fire?"

Here Allegra shrugged impatiently, but Gappy rebuked her with a gesture of her small claw, saying, philanthropically: "Let's humor this delirium. No, Harmony, the place has not been on fire, but you do smell smoke. The lodger is upstairs studying and when he comes to a hard, medicine place he puts his lighted pipe in his pocket. We smell him when he burns. Otherwise,

he's a model lodger and we'd never know he is here."

"Then what is the matter?" demanded Harmony in exasperation, going back to her original question.

"I guess nobody knows but you," was Gappy's meek but suggestive reply.

Thus admonished, Harmony bethought herself to pull from her pocket the disquieting telegram and display it with the puzzled question:

"Who can have sent it?"

Allegra snatched the paper from Harmony, frowning at it, and Gappy snatched it from Allegra.

"Signed by Surrey," said Gappy executively.

"Why, I didn't see Surrey's name!" confessed Harmony.

"It isn't here to see—just the initials—S. B. H."

Here Allegra snatched the message for the second time, poring over it till Har-

mony, in her turn, snatched again.irate little Gappy surveyed this inconsequential behavior with scorn.

"While they're playing 'button, button, who's got the button,' I'll have to Hawkshaw to the bottom of this myself," she murmured, and, slipping out to the telephone in the hall, she did some shrewd detective work. She came back bursting with importance and proceeded to enlighten her still befogged elders.

"I rang up Surrey's firm," she explained, "and what do you suppose I found out? Something astonishing, but very nice. They've raised Surrey's position, or his salary, or maybe both have gone up together—at any rate, it is a promotion all around. And it plainly went to Surrey's head, for he asked for a day off, and he's got it and gone to Miss Mallory's."

"What a place to go to for a day off," shivered Allegra, licking pensively at the ink stain on her poetic white forefinger.



“Signed by Surrey,” said Gappy executively

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"Why to Miss Mallory's?" asked puzzled Harmony.

Gappy wafted a little sigh, caused by the ignorant surroundings she was in.

"To bring you home, of course, in case the telegram (I believe 'wire' is what they say downtown, though that doesn't matter uptown, does it?) didn't budge you."

"It would have budged a—a—a petrified rhinoceros with all his legs tied," proclaimed Harmony indignantly.

Harmony indignant was always a funny sight, so they all burst out laughing—she first. Somehow or other Harmony could never enjoy the tragedies of life, feeling always at home and contented with its safe, sweet commonplace of good temper, which, by the way, made her very nice and uncommon. Gappy used to say that Harmony was the only sister she ever knew "who was nicer inside than outside"—"the house," was her mental conclusion to these locations, though she did not so specify, and her com-

pliment lost some of its vagueness when she added, "though when I meet her on the street I'm glad as if she was folks—and gladder than if she was *some* folks. Harmony is a steady comfort to me, for I'm a person very easily flustered. Harmony's no flusterer."

Gappy let the "no flusterer" have her laugh out before saying, as a necessary dampener:

"What makes it very pleasant, indeed, that Surrey's salary is raised is that the cook lady and her little boy have given up the barn. They got a position somewhere else. But they left the barn beautifully clean and livable. It's just like a bungaloo—galow—galo (isn't it funny, the more often you say some words the less like themselves they sound?) I've been playing house in it. A raise of salary—now, ten cents would be a raise. If Surrey is raised ten cents, while the cook lady lowers us five dollars, why should we hold jubilee?

Hadn't we better be shown further into this thing before using up any too much joy?"

"Surrey said he would work till he earned as much as his first salary and mine put together," said Harmony gently, her bright eyes tender with the memory of the far-off little scene she had had with her taciturn, proud young brother, the battered rocking-horse the only witness between them. Nice old, hairless Dobbin, outgrown, but still dearly loved! she certainly would pay Dobbin a sentimental visit—that is, if she had now any right to a free afternoon. "I don't know whether to stay here or to go back to Miss Mallory's," was her voicing of this indecision.

"I know," affirmed Gappy resolutely. "Do you think I'm going to listen to Allegra 'Kiss, Ah, Kissing Her Under the Mistletoe' all afternoon? (when it ought to be under the brows or under the chin, some place where it would really count).

You are going to stay here, to be company to me."

She solved matters by pulling off Harmony's hat.

Then they all laughed again and trooped upstairs to Lady's room, where she sat sewing. Yes, true, Lady's pretty hair was "fluffed" a trifle, and the effect was, as Gappy had keenly said, as if Lady cared to live again.

"My girl!" was Lady's amazed cry at sight of Harmony.

"Oh, mother-lady, mother-lady!" cried Harmony, folding the little person in her strong young arms. "I love you so, you kind of set me aleak when I catch sight of you unbeknownst." Harmony gave her mother one or two manly pats on the back as an offset to too much feminine emotion.

She then straightened up to ask in the usual embarrassed way: "Is—is father—can I see him—that is—?"

"Yes," murmured Lady, drooping her

head. "He is about as usual. Sometimes I hope—and then again it seems wrong to *dare* to hope."

"I know—I know," choked Harmony. Conquering her feeling almost of repugnance, she walked steadily into the adjoining room, where she was so sadly wont to find him spinning a child's top or drawing crudely on a slate or occupying himself in other trivial ways.

To-day he was reading, his fine, handsome head propped on one white, scholarly hand. He glanced up naturally as she approached, his face lighting brightly, then rose quickly to greet her.

"Why, Harmony, child, where have you been for several days?" he asked eagerly, his hands outstretched. He was his old, dear self. There was no doubt about it.

Usually so wise and sweet in a crisis, poor, shaken Harmony failed here. Her too-ready sympathy played havoc with a sensitive situation.

"Father!" she cried intensely. "Do you really know me? Do you really know me again? Father! Father!"

His hands drew back, fell to his side, then aimlessly began to twitch at his coat. The light died in his face and his eyes clouded.

"What a noise you make!" he fretted, fractious again.

"Oh, father!" begged Harmony, clinging to his arm. "Speak to me as you did at first! See, it is your Harmony beside you. Don't forget her so soon! Oh, do say my name again after all these terrible months!"

"Terrible months," he muttered. "Just nothing but cat's cradle. Aren't you the little girl who's so clever at cat's cradle?"

"Yes," she said, weeping quietly as he sank back into his chair and drummed vacantly on the table. "I'll go get a piece of string."

She groped her way to the door and soon

was with the others. Disconcerted, dumb, they had no consolation to offer her.

"But he was all right, all right!" she averred passionately. "There was no mistaking it. And I set him back—I set him back!"

"Don't accuse yourself," said Lady, with trembling lips. "He has these days of late. I used to think him better, but now—" She wrung her small hands in helpless conclusion.

"But he was all right," persisted Harmony, bravely dry-eyed by now, but wearied and worried. "If I only knew what to do next time."

"Beg p-p-pardon," stammered Ernst Heller, appearing magically at the doorway, but looking, it must be confessed, less like a fairy godmother than a wicked step-mother, for his hair was sticking wildly ninety-five different ways all over his head where his studious fingers had poked it, his face was wrinkled with application, and a

protesting thread of smoke curled from one bulging pocket, baggy with the carrying of books two sizes too large for it. Yet, somehow, Ernst brought calm with him. "P-p-pardon. I overheard what happened. Miss Harmony was sadly right and set him back."

A thrill, half terror and half hope, shook his startled listeners. Harmony characteristically dismissed terror and made a welcome for hope.

"Tell us what to do when—when he comes back again. Please, Ernst!"

Ernst Heller reddened like a girl at her personal appeal and stammered frightfully in consequence.

"Do? D-d-do nothing, j-j-just nothing and k-k-keep on with it f-f-for d-d-dear l-l-life!"

"You mean answer him naturally and not startle him? Will that help?"

"It may and may not. A mind that has

run away hates to come back. I cannot promise you. But this I can—if it ever does come back, it will come to stay. Is that an earthquake?”

“Surrey,” translated Gappy, listening critically to the sounds below.

CHAPTER IX

"Surrey?" asked Harmony incredulously. "Since when does he come home like a reaping machine with a brass-band attachment?"

"Since he was therapeuted," said Gappy, sinking her voice in awe at mention of the mighty occult.

"Since he was Janwayed," contradicted Ernst Heller, in whose twinkling eye was a physician's healthy belief in Nature's curative openness rather than in her mysteries.

"I've got to see this," announced Harmony, making for the sounds. Her sisters followed her downstairs. They reached there just as Surrey had finished a spirited jig, with whistle, on the back stoop. How that fragile structure bore up under it without mushing to pulp is inexplicable.

Then with a wild Indian whoop, merely as a diversion for his lungs, he banged open the back door, evidently with the flat of his hand, clattered through the kitchen, swept into the sitting-room like a whirlwind and dumped a bulging suitcase to the floor.

"Yours, old girl," he said affably to Harmony. "I filched it from under the very nose of the Mallory. Whee! but she can talk. I let her. She can't hurt me; can't hurt a man who's to get twelve and a half a week. That's the figure. Multiply it by four while I go up and tell Lady." He dashed excitedly from the room.

"My suitcase?" said Harmony darkly, as she bent fondly over its straps, undoing them. "I wonder what all he's got in here."

But before she could unpack and straighten out her jumbled belongings Surrey was in their midst again biting ravenously at a big slab of pie which he had somehow obtained in transit.

"That Keeper of the Nose," he said, in vicious remembrance of Miss Mallory, "said something disgusting about you. I've a good mind not to repeat it."

"Tell me," said Harmony, feeling suddenly faint.

"Why, she said—but, first, I said what started it. I said that you would not come back—to her, you know. And then's when she said it."

"Said what?" pleaded Harmony. Surely her eccentric old mistress and, yes, friend, could not have pronounced bitter sentence against her!

"Said that if she knew you, you *would* come back in order to get your reward of labor. Now what a skinflint she must think you. I wanted to tell her that she could keep your few hours of wages for herself, that I donated them to her. But I knew Lady wouldn't like it, so I kept quiet."

"I often think myself that Lady made a big mistake in bringing us up to be polite,"

sighed Gappy commiseratingly. "I, too, know what it is to think up some perfectly lovely bad thing to say and then have to cork it in and choke over it."

Harmony's face had been clearing gloriously. "Why, she's a darling! She never meant wages at all. The 'Reward of Labor' is a heavenly delicious statuette she gave me. Let me tell you about it."

At this point the door bell rang and Gappy, who went to answer it, held up a hand first for silence. "Keep still till I come back, for I don't want to lose anything."

But when she did reappear, she was full of new matter which crowded out the old, and in her hand was a bunch of hothouse roses, which she held heads downward like beets, and so presented them to the flattered but mystified Harmony.

"He said 'for Harmony,'" she repeated in the sepulchral tones she kept sacred to joy. "And he's in the parlor in a new suit

and a very high collar; looks handsome as Apollinario and asks to see you."

"Who?" asked Harmony, her raptured nose in the roses.

"Ted Edrington."

Harmony rather slowly put the roses down.

"Well, ask him to come in, Gappy dear," she said.

"I started to, but he looked so like a gentleman, I left off. The parlor suits his complexion."

"Ted!" yelled Harmony musically, "come on in!"

She had had enough and more than enough of playing grown up with this masterful young lad and she knew of no better way to get back to the old footing than by making him one of the home "bunch," as Gappy called it.

So "Apollinario" stalked down the little passageway and appeared in the sitting-room, showing by the attempt of cold maj-

esty on his face that he did not know whether to take his summons to the inner circle of things as a compliment or the reverse.

He certainly was radiant of apparel and handsome as to countenance, and altogether was so well-groomed and haughtily ornamental that Harmony weakly left off being critical and gave herself over to silent approval of his good points, which, if few, were undeniably striking.

After a nod to Surrey, who melted into the kitchen to get more pie (inhospitably for himself alone), Ted bowed with his usual stern correctness to Allegra: "Good-afternoon, Allegra," then, more sternly, more correctly to Harmony: "Good-afternoon, Harmony."

"Hullo, Ted." She purposely resorted to the lowness of "hullo" as a necessary balance to the prevailing grandeur.

"I saw you in the street, Harmony," said Ted stiffly, "and I followed you here."

"Mercy me!" commented Gappy, her eye traveling to the clock. "What a slow follow!"

"No, Gillian, it was a quick follow but a long wait outside."

"A wait for what? (and thank you for the 'Gillian')."

"For courage, I guess," said Harmony, looking apologetic.

"Harmony," asked Ted, with cold directness, "had you any right, the other day, to speak to me as you did?"

"Not the least in the world," she answered promptly.

"I should think you would be sorry," he went on, though with a loss of coldness and a gain of becoming and rare embarrassment.

"I have been sorry every minute since," she admitted, even more promptly, and, if possible, more softly.

These concessions of hers, taken in conjunction with the cozy homeliness of the

sociable sitting-room, knocked the last trace of arrogance from Ted's heart and set free the natural teasing boyishness of it. He forgot that he was the glass of fashion and the mold of form, and became just plain, impish Ted, sinking to his knees at astonished Harmony's feet.

"Dear Miss Harmony Hall, will you go to the theater with me?" he asked, earnest in spite of his attitude.

"Good. gracious alive, Ted, get up!" ordered Harmony, the conscious red flying to her face and beautifying it conspicuously.

Ted still groveled, enjoying himself and her contrition immensely. "This is what you said you wanted, Harmony. Will you go to the theater with me?"

"Anywhere, anything, if you'll only get up."

"To-night?" he insisted, picking up the hem of her dress and printing a devout salute upon it.

"Now," promised Harmony, frantically

jerking her garment out of prominence. She was glowing like a sunset. She was laughing, too.

"This," confided Gappy severely to Allegra, as the triumphant Ted rose to his due height, "is evidently a good joke, only we seem to be entirely out of it."

"Entirely," corroborated Ted, with decision. "By the way, Harmony, Belle sends you this message: 'You have been elected president of the Good Book Club.'"

"Never, never!" cried Harmony, almost as if repudiating an insult. The honor was too big to be believable.

"Really," assured Ted, walking patronizingly around the small apartment, his hand in his lordly pocket, his critical eye on certain bric-à-brac of questionable vertu. He did not mean to offend. He was simply a born aristocrat. "You see, old Janway's a friend of father. He came to dinner the other night and told us what careful work you were doing on his paper. Belle called

a special meeting of the club, told about it, proposed your name for next president, and we unanimously elected you."

"How can I ever order them around in the awful way a president should?" bewailed Harmony, flattered out of her seven senses.

"From the sample you gave me the other day," said Ted dryly, pausing in his princely perambulations, "I think it will come easy to you."

"When are you going to forget all that, Ted?" demanded Harmony, more restive than meek.

"To-night, at the theater. I'll go now, and let you get ready. The carriage will be here at seven thirty."

"Carriage!" crooned Gappy ecstatically. "When will a real live carriage ever come for me! Good-by, Ted."

"Not good-by, at all, till things are settled," said Harmony, arresting her departing visitor. "Gracious, how affairs are

whirligigging to-day. Ted, I know I promised, but it was on the rack, under torture, and, as you know, Lady doesn't like theaters with carriages and no chaperons. Besides, I must go back to Miss Mallory's to-night."

"As for the first set of objections, Lady Hall and I came to an understanding days ago. Yes, you may flash your eyes, Harmony, but I got Lady on my side. I felt able to go ahead then. And when I told her that our old colored man, Uncle Mimmy, was to drive us, she broke out laughing and said she gave in, that Uncle Mimmy was the strictest chaperon in town. But how about this Mallory turn of the wheel?"

"That's what I'd like to know, too," accused Surrey, striding in from the kitchen; "didn't I settle things in that quarter for once and for all?"

"Yes, Surrey, you did, and I thank you and intend to take the rest you have earned

for me. But I must first play fair with Miss Mallory."

"And how, pray?" put in Allegra, disdainful of Miss Mallory's mere name.

"By being an uncommon servant instead of a common one and not leaving her in the lurch. You know how furious we used to get when *our* maids faded like fireflies in the night and never glowed again. We used to say they had no sense of responsibility or honor. I'd be worse than they if I did not go back for at least a few days. Why, the poor, snarly, lonely little old person wouldn't have a soul to get her breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Well, telephone that you'll arrive there late to-night," said Ted, seeing signs of well-known immovability about his erratic Harmony, "and I'll drive you over after the performance."

"She hasn't any telephone," hazarded Gappy, "she thinks they are nerve-racking,

rest-destroying, ear-splitting evils of a noise-worshipping age."

"How do you know?" asked Harmony, startled at hearing almost the exact words of Miss Mallory's objections.

"Just guessed," yawned Gappy, as one to whom the divination had been a trifle. "Some things come easier by guessing than by finding out."

After a good deal of family conclaving, things were settled to every one's satisfaction, Surrey even heroically carrying out his offer to go again to Miss Mallory's, break the welcome news of the temporary return of her maid, and incidentally to wheedle out of the really tractable old lady, to whom youth and its doings were veritable tonics, a door key for that flighty maid to let herself in with.

"I kind of like the cat," was Surrey's politely meant tribute, as he threw down the key.

Ted had long been gone, supper was

over, and Harmony looked a damsel to be proud of in her blue-gray dress which matched her eyes, and her pink roses which matched her brilliant cheeks.

"As for Ted, he's a dream at golden dawn," murmured Gappy, still later, when she announced the arrival of the carriage. "All he needs, Harmony, is to take the tube-rose from his buttonhole and hang a napkin on his arm to be a perfect waiter. He's got those kinds of clothes on him. If you didn't know he was just Ted, Harmony, you'd think he was somebody. Good-night, darling, have a lovely time."

Well, Harmony had it. If she had not, if she had failed to enjoy the pleasure and excitement of the play, failed to take delight in the prettiness of the Edrington carriage, failed to gasp joyously at the splendor of the Edrington private box, failed to be shyly elated at the public attentiveness of the town's richest and handsomest lad, she would also have failed of

being the wholesome, fresh, unspoiled, eager-hearted, fun-loving girl that she was. Yes, Harmony had her honest good time.

"And you are a jewel of forgiveness, Ted," she said, in a whisper, when it was all over, and she stood upon Miss Mallory's redoubtable doorstep, shaking hands with him vehemently.

"It is you who are forgiving," murmured Ted, in his best deferential and holding pleasantly to the hand.

Here Uncle Mimmy coughed the hollow cough of one who was perishing for sleep, and in a gale of giggles the young people made a final parting.

"I'll be the goodest servant in the world to-morrow," Harmony drowsily promised Miss Mallory's dark bedroom door as she passed it on her way up to her own room, "to even up for this night of utter and unadulterated glee."

And as usual, she kept her promise, start-

ing off nobly and early with a breakfast of Miss Mallory's best liking.

"This meal's a poem," observed Harmony, confiding, as was her wont, in her uneasy, teetering friend, the parrot. "A poem," putting down the bacon on toast. "A sheer *vilanelle*," placing her freshest rose in the center vase, "with a *l'envoi*, an effective *l'envoi*," and she gravely planked down a covered dish of hot cakes.

Except for a curt "good-morning!" Miss Mallory held no conversation with her. Throughout the long day Harmony vigorously swept, dusted, polished, cooked, without the coming parting being broached at all.

"Do you suppose she's forgotten?" Harmony asked the parrot when she passed it at four o'clock with her tugging dogs on their straps.

As if the idea had struck it dead, it tumbled from its perch in a pink and green heap to the floor of the cage, and lay chok-

ing with laughter. "Aw, there, Smarty, ho, ho, ho, ha, ha, ha, he, he, he, ho, ho, ho!"

"Well, you certainly seem to know," observed Harmony, preparing to pass on. With a shriek of dismay it clawed its ungainly way, or rather *beaked* its way up the bars and back to the perch, sticking out its ruffled neck in a keen appeal for a scratching.

"Wait your turn, gentlemen," she admonished the tugging Ham and Eggs, whose eyes were goggling from their strained sockets, "and for serenity's sake keep yourself all in one piece while I administer to this wicked green head."

She scratched the parrot to a state of somnolence, then proceeded on her way, actually sobered into regret by the idea that her term of service was practically over and that her animal friends would know her no more.

"So you may take me where you please,"

she conceded almost tearfully to the dogs when she got them into the street, "just so long as it isn't around and around your pet lamp post or into your favorite saloon."

Rather enjoying the novelty of being tugged hither and yon, she got into many strange byways before waking to a full realization of what had been for a long time a hazy doubt—that someone was persistently following her.

With Harmony, to know was always to act, so she faced about with an unheralded suddenness which brought her almost upon the toes of her shadower.

He recoiled a step or two, doffing his cap en route. He was a boy whom Harmony thought at first was ugly, then plain, then nice, then positively fine looking.

"Are you following me?" she asked evenly.

"Just as fast as possible," he panted.

He was so winning about it that Harmony wavered in her judgment.

"Do I know you?" she parried.

"Not from Adam," was the lad's hearty assurance.

"Then what do you want?" going back to steeliness.

"Wanted to get a good look at you," explained the youth, so courteously that she wondered if he were mad or she. "Wanted to see if I liked you, and I do."

"Why, listen to me," adjured Harmony earnestly. "You are not talking properly. You mustn't talk to girls that way, girls you don't know, too."

"I know it," agreed the boy promptly. "So does father. We have never had girl friends, that's why he advised me to get acquainted with you—for you are Harmony Hall, aren't you? I hope"—with increased charm and politeness—"that I haven't been shinning up the wrong tree."

"Yes, I am Harmony Hall," said that perplexed party. Then she blurted: "But you simply mustn't use slang to me."

"That's right, sock it into me. Make me feel like scum. That's what father said. He said we boys would be blots on the landscape unless we could get some nice girls to tell us that we were scum. Father thinks a bagful of you. I'm J. J., Jr., mostly Jim."

"James Janway, Jr.?" she cried.

He bowed with quick courtesy, then extended a frank hand which she shook chiefly because she did not know what else to do with it. The shake she got in return was thoroughly reassuring, friendly, and warm, without a touch of flippancy or presumption.

Taking this for the properest of introductions, J. J., Jr., replaced his cap and strolled along by her side on the way back to Miss Mallory's.

Wise as to boy's suits from her frequent wish and constant inability to buy Surrey a really proper outfit, Harmony saw that "mostly Jim's" garments, though of a

rough-and-ready usefulness, were cut by a good tailor and in absolute correctness of style. From his leather buttons to his hand-knit silk tie of tan her startling new cavalier was what Gappy would have called another "dream of golden dawn."

Almost in echo of her thoughts the lad was now saying:

"As for Gappy, I've seen her, and Allegra, too. We boys scouted around your home and watched. Gappy's the thin, lizardy one, isn't she?—with a voice like spun glass and honey. And Allegra's kind of Lily-maid-of-Astolat-y. Um! That's how we made it out. You see, when father said we had to call, we foraged around first to see if we wanted to. And we do. So we're coming."

Harmony's deerlike head went suddenly up in the air.

"A gentleman waits till he's asked to come," she observed decidedly.

"Does he?" asked the boy interestedly.
"Why?"

"So as to be sure he is wanted," tutored Harmony, in her stoniest tones.

"And you don't want us?" stammered the lad, growing so suddenly crimson that Harmony felt a bewildered sense of having been the only one in the wrong.

"Why, yes, I do," she said, rather amazed to find this true, "and I think Lady would like you, too."

"Thank you," he said gratefully. "Lady. That's your mother, a dovey sort with eyelashes that bat up and down. My mother"—here he unconsciously bared his head—"is dead."

"Oh," said Harmony, touched into a knowledge of the main reason for the lad's unconviction. She shook hands with him again. It was time anyhow, since she was at Miss Mallory's door.

"You may expect to see us any time," promised J. J., Jr. "There are four of us,

you know, and we have to visit all together so as to give each other courage. We are timid when separate."

"If what you are showing now is timidity," Harmony was forced to say, "your courage must be something awful."

"Awful's the word," agreed J. J., Jr., heartily. "If you noticed, we did considerable for Surrey."

"I noticed," said Harmony, rather grimly.

"In return we want you to fit us out with manners. Father says you girls are our last whack at salvation."

"Your father *never* speaks that way!" flashed Harmony, to whom "Jim January" was on very much of a pedestal.

"You don't know father," observed Jim, Jr., cheerfully. "Good-day."

He wheeled about and was gone with a surety and decision which warmed Harmony's heart, she being no friend of shilly-shallying.

"After saying 'good-by,' people mostly dawdle around long enough to learn Spanish in," murmured she to the tiny span of dogs as she knelt by them on the kitchen floor removing their straps. She had to tilt her head far back, they being given to dabbing coy, quick, wet kisses upon her face whenever they could reach it. "Be off with you. And now for a supper as *is* a supper, which haply may soften my lady's heart toward me."

But the day came to its end, still in silence, and so did the following, till came the last day of all.

"And you're nothing but a hypocrite, Harmony Hall," she told herself, in chagrin and sorrow. "You have been calling yourself a servant yet hoping all the while you were a friend, and now when it is proven that you *are* just a servant, and can go without a look being thrown after you, you have your meet and due reward. That reminds me of my statue."

Finally, hatted and cloaked, and pretty as a picture, with confusion Harmony stood before Miss Mallory to say good-by.

"Oh, *good-by!*" jerked the old lady impatiently, her eyes riveted to a book.

"You have someone coming to help you?" essayed Harmony.

"*Certainly not.*"

Effectually crushed, Harmony turned away, but before she reached the door was transfixed by hearing:

"You *proud, overbearing* girl! *can* you do it?"


"Goodness gracious, dear Miss Mallory," cried Harmony, in a panic. "Do what?"

"Go without *one* kind, *decent* word!"

"Why, I'll gabble for an hour," cried Harmony eagerly, kneeling down beside the shaking old lady. "I didn't want to presume—"

"*Fiddlestrings!* Tell me about this *super* that *sulky Surrey* mentioned!"

Harmony laughed in shy amazement.



So Surrey had made confidence, had he? Wonderful, and the old lady wanted to hear more, did she? Wonderfuller!

"We call them 'orgies,' " explained Harmony, sitting back easily on her heels.

"*'Orgies'*? Abominable word!"

Harmony nodded. "Abominable, but if we earn an unexpected ten cents we have a ten-cent orgie. That's generally molasses candy. If twenty-five cents, we have a twenty-five-cent orgie. That's usually some kind of cake. If fifty cents, well, it's so rare, I've forgotten. And to-night, when Surrey gets paid his first big salary, he's going to have a whole two-dollar orgie! Think of it! Ice cream and cold chicken!"

Though Harmony was smiling, her undercurrent of feeling was anything but mirthful, she remembering too keenly Surrey's face of suffering as he had cried out, even while planning his little rejoicing:

"Harmony, it seems almost wicked to try

to be happy with poor father as he is! I can't do it! I won't do it!"

"It is wicked not to try to be happy," she had told him, and had coaxed him back to his original idea. But the full glee of the "orgie" was gone for both of them.

"Do you know all about father?" asked Harmony suddenly, of Miss Mallory.

"Yes." The old lady spoke gently.

"Well, if you are not afraid," said Harmony finally, after thinking things out, "won't you come to see us if ever you get lonely and want to hear us chatter?"

"Good-by," said Miss Mallory definitely.

Truly that meant get up from one's heels, so Harmony did.

"I simply give her up," observed Harmony, with desperate calmness, when she found herself out upon the street. "Now for home."

And had she guessed what there awaited her she mightn't have walked as leisurely as she did.

CHAPTER X

Gappy opened the door for her and the two girls fell into each other's arms.

"I didn't mind your being a servant a bit," half sobbed Gappy, "but I am glad you turned into a literary character and have come back to be a sister to me."

"That I have," said Harmony promptly, as she took the implement out of Gappy's small brown claw and made a quick finish of the half-swept entry. "The pen may be mightier than the sword, but the broom is mightier than the pen."

"If only Allegra thought that way," sighed Gappy, watching Harmony's despatch with admiration. "Instead of keeping in love with the lodger, who never knows she's on earth except when he trips over her and falls downstairs (don't frown,

Harmony, I know this is no subject for a child, but facts are facts), and now she sees a broom less than ever since she's taken to composing the *ballade*. For Art's great sake, don't call them ballads; it's *ballade*, with a frightful accent on the 'lard.' But come upstairs and see your literary sank."

"My *what?*"

"Allegra called it sanctum but we made it sank for short. It's your room all fixed up for literature. Lady did it. Come see."

"Indeed, I will," said Harmony interestedly.

To fly upstairs, to fall into dear Lady's welcoming arms, to rouse Allegra from a poetic dream to life's vivid brutality, and altogether to visit the "sank" was short work for happy Harmony.

"Oh, the room is lovely—lovely!" she cried. And it was love had done it, not money. Money may talk, but love sings. To Harmony, the turned matting, giving evidence of hours of care, was finer than

Persian rugs; the freshly done-up muslin curtains were better than tapestry; the scarred little oaken desk which had been Lady's when a girl and which till now had always held a sacred corner in Lady's room was more precious than an inlaid *escritoire*; the new hanging shelf for reference books was a veritable altar—such sacrifice had gone to the buying of it—and the pot of sweet fern on the windowsill filled the air as with incense. "Why, if I can't write here, I can't write at all!" breathed Harmony, with conviction.

"If you can't write at all, don't dare write here; this is a sure-enough editorial sank," admonished Gappy.

"To give you a proper word," said Allegra loftily, "is pearls before swine."

"*'Is'* pearls?—if that's poetry, Allegra, it's not grammar. Talking of poetry—trot out your latest thing in *ballades* for Harmony. She looks strong."

But Harmony had withdrawn from the

sisterly tilt and was conferring anxiously with Lady.

"He is not asleep," Lady was saying. "He never sleeps now—in the daytime, I mean."


"I'll go see him," said Harmony nervously.

She walked toward her father's room, and, as she went, unconsciously pulled some string from her pocket, knotting it the right length for cat's cradle.

"Father," she said, brightly, entering to him, "How are you?"

"Why, Harmony, dear!" he cried, coming to her and putting his arms around her. "I'm so glad to see you. I've been rather worrying over something lately—"

"Well, now, you'll just stop that," she interrupted cheerfully, as to a child. She did not look at him, but caught his two hands in her pretty, capable fashion and skilfully slipped on the string in an intricate pattern. "Poke out your fingers, that's



the way." Then she patted him on the back. "There. Work away at it. If the talk annoys you I'll shut it out." She walked to the door between the rooms, in the other one of which were Lady, Allegra, Gappy, and—from the voice—Ernst Heller.

"You need not shut the door, Harmony. Come here, daughter."

"Don't say you've got it tangled already!"

"No, Harmony, not tangled; disengaged, please Providence. Look up at me, daughter."

In quizzical, gentle brightness he was gazing at her, with a light in his eyes as clear and steady as the stars. Pulling the string from his fingers with a slow definiteness he put it on the table behind him. Then he smiled, and in the smile was a perfect heaven of relief and thankfulness.

Harmony crept quietly into his arms. "I am glad you are well," she whispered.

"And I. I have been—*well* as you put

it—for several days, but have been silent, waiting to be sure.”

“And did not tell Lady!”

“I had to be sure.” She felt him tremble at Lady’s name.

“Let’s go in to her, for you are sure now.”

“Sure, thank God.”

“I can’t let go of you,” said Harmony, shaking, as she kept her arms about him while walking into the next room.

“Ah, but you’ll have to,” he admonished her gently, as he freed himself to hold out his hands to Lady.

Lady, at the sewing machine, rose like a spirit and gave him one searching look.

Then nobody remembers just the sequence, but, husband and wife were locked silently in each other’s arms, Allegra was weeping in torrents, Harmony smiling, Gappy was hopping up and down in one spot, and Ernst Heller after telephoning to Dr. Cody was back in the room and was addressing his former invalid:

"I am Ernst Heller, Mr. Hall, Dr. Cody's assistant, I see you recognize me. Dr. Cody tells me he has been expecting your recovery and knows it to be complete. Allow me to congratulate you."

The two men shook hands speechlessly. That is the distinguishing mark about great occasions—they are practically wordless.

And yet—

"Isn't it wondrous?" Allegra was weepingly asking.

"Dad's all right, all right, all right!" Gappy was shrilling.

"Hurrah for Surrey's orgie!" from Harmony.

Ernst Heller looked pained, and turned into a doctor.

"Girls, go downstairs, please," was his command.

They went, of course, but feeling extremely injured, and they spent an interminable half-hour waiting for him to come to them with fuller news. They could have

shrieked aloud when they heard him in the hall again telephoning another bulletin to Dr. Cody.

They all but mobbed him when he finally came into them.

"What are we to do for him? How will it be best for us to treat him?" they cried.

"L-l-lunatics all three of you," he said affably. "You don't have to t-t-treat him."

"He's truly—*well?*" asked Harmony.

"Truly."

"For keeps?" begged Gappy piteously.

"He is absolutely all right. To prevent his possible worrying about employment, Cody has arranged to offer him a position as catalogist and librarian of a private medical library. The work pays rather little but will keep him busy and contented for a year, for as long as he's willing, in fact—Miss Harmony, if *you* start crying, I g-g-give up the gug-gug-ghost!"

Which started her laughing instead.

"Surrey!" shrieked Gappy deliriously, hearing some mighty approach.

"Let me in, girls," his voice was heard at the back door. "I've got my hands so full of eats I can't even bang. So has the magnificent Ted, who is with me. Ganymede's a slouch to him."

The three girls made a simultaneous dash for their brother.

"Hullo, angels," he said, blinking in the light and entering with his arms laden, Ted equally laden in the rear, but more statuesque about it. "Why this shining multitude?"

"Something's happened!" choked Gappy.

He looked away from her and turned to Harmony, going suddenly white and pale.

"Not the best thing in the whole world?" he faltered incredulously.

"Yes, dear," replied Harmony, "you've said it—the best thing in the whole world."

He simply relaxed his muscles and packages of nuts, cake, candy, and feastings gen-

erally fell from him to the floor in a rain of unusual plenty. Unencumbered, he sped from the room and was heard leaping upstairs three steps at each bound.

Too finically well-bred to give evidence of having heard anything not personally addressed to him, Ted Edrington, after polite recognition of his friends, was as methodically putting Surrey's purchases upon the kitchen table as though those friends' palpable excitement was not all but lifting the roof off their modest abode.

Gappy flew at him literally, and gave the astounded youth probably the first and certainly the best shaking he had ever had in his life. "You make me frantic," she explained, "no matter how well a person gets to know you the night before, she has to begin all over again the morning after. Ask us what's the matter!"

"Is anything?" he inquired loftily, rearranging his coat.

So they told him in chorus, and he was as

interested as he knew how to be, which was not violently much, but he asked permission to go upstairs and pay his respects, and, on the whole, his reserve and conventionality did a comfortable deal to calm down the prevailing flutter.

"Why do you suppose he comes to see us?" asked Harmony—"we're so different."

"That's just it," said Gappy, "we're a sort of zoo, and whenever Ted gets bored with the marble halls of his own *spear* of life he comes to look at us scramble for peanuts."

"Well, let's scramble," said Harmony amiably. And they all flew around, lighting up and "tittivating" for the supper.

Suddenly from the darkness outside there arose the most perfect music the world knows, a quartet of boys' voices singing divinely, "I'll Go no More A-Roaming."

"What bobolinks are those?" asked Gappy, startled, her trained ear reveling in the richness.

"The Janway four or I'm a sinner!" cried Surrey.

He was no sinner, for when he opened the front door and peered at the dark-enshrined warblers, J. J., Jr.'s, voice called out affably:

"Go back in and drown yourself, Surrey. It's not you we're visiting to-night, but your sisters."

"In that case we'll visit," said Allegra, and the three girls stole to the open doorway, to stand entranced with the caressing melody of "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes."

"Won't you come in, boys?" invited Harmony, when the last sighing note died away. She felt absurd talking into the darkness.

"Thank you, no," answered another Janway. "This is a first call and father told us fifteen minutes was the limit for a first call, and he also cautioned us, if we wanted to make a good impression, not on our lives

to talk, but sing. Start up the last, boys, we've only three minutes more."

And in farewell came "Good Night, Ladies." At the refrain, "Merrily we roll along," the shadowy quartet began stealing away, and with the last faint notes of "Over the dark blue sea!" the quiet little street was, as usual, deserted.

"What heavenly adventurers," dreamed Allegra ecstatically, as she reluctantly shut the door.

"What utter idiots!" contradicted the half-vexed Harmony, who liked less drama in callers.

"But, singing idiots," said Gappy forgivingly. "I rather see some good times ahead. Have they begun already?"

For the front-door bell gave a dominant peal.

Harmony, who was nearest, opened the door, then she nearly jumped out of her boots. Real anxiety and not lack of hospitality made her exclaim:

"Why, Miss Mallory! what do you want?"

"*Want?* To be asked *in!* Of course, I got lonely."

"Oh, come in—come in," begged the penitent Harmony.

"*Lively* room! Filled with chatter-boxes!" rejoiced the old lady, willingly parting with her wraps and accepting an easy chair in the sitting-room, which certainly *was* lively, its smallness being filled to the brim with the three girls and three boys, for Ernst was not much more in spite of a diploma and eyeglasses. From upstairs there floated down a trickle of low laughter—Lady and her biggest Boy, making friends again with happiness.

"And where's the orgie?" demanded Miss Mallory, looking around for it as if it had been a cat.

"Coming!" cried Harmony, whisking on the tablecloth, "nearly tea time. Help! All hands to the pump. Since we've no

ten-course dinner and a butler in our 'spear,' Ted, I know it's no use asking *you* to stay." Hinting frightfully for him to go.

"Isn't it?" he asked coolly. "Try it and see."

"Needn't t-t-try on me," announced Ernst Heller, "I'm g-g-going to stay without being asked."

"Then you'll both make toast," said Gappy, presenting each with a fork.

Gappy's tact was never at fault. She set Miss Mallory to cracking nuts. "They crack," she said in an awed whisper to the others, "when the shadow of her nose and chin falls on them!"—and thus the three outsiders, being employed, felt themselves to be useful, to be at home, and wanted.

Though slightly inclined to pass Miss Mallory always at a safe distance, as if the old lady were a chestnut on a hot fender liable to explode at any moment, Allegra played hostess nicely and brewed tea pic-

turesquely. Harmony set the big table with the astonishing number of things which the proud Surrey brought to her as the outlay of his two dollars. Gappy broiled bacon and opened jars of home-made jam.

"A noble spread," announced Surrey, proudly admiring its polyglot profusion as it stretched across the board.

Perhaps it is just as well that Ernst Heller professionally advised that the two heads of the house should feast in the quiet retirement of upstairs, for the babel in the sitting-room was certainly frightful.

"A sensible young man," said Miss Malory to Harmony. Then with real gentleness: "And he told me the good news. I am glad, my dear."

Harmony could only press her hand.

"Sit down, everybody," invited Allegra graciously.

"'Step lively!'" croaked Harmony, as a relief to her bottled up feelings.

"And let us all talk only in turn," advised Gappy. Which was the cleverest of moves, for everybody's anguished endeavor to make a suitable remark as his or her turn came around caused a perpetual gale of laughter and kept Miss Mallory, Ted, and Ernst from wondering what they were doing there at all.

"S-s-such a nice, *vulgar* time!" cried Ernst, speaking out of his turn and stopping the game.

"But I've thought of something dismal!" cried Harmony, her regretful eye on him. "My resumption of the 'sank' shuts you out into the cold world, Ernst."

Here Allegra gave a dramatic start and tried to look pallid, but, as no one was noticing her, it did not matter.

"You c-c-can't lose me," said Ernst winningly. "Gillian has rented me the barn. Surrey has agreed to bunk with me. There will be sounds of r-r-rev-revelry by night."

Allegra sipped revivingly at a glass of water.

"Oh, Miss Mallory," wheedled Gappy, "what was it you wanted to see me about?"

"Wanted to know if you would come to Europe with me next spring and take some good music lessons," said Miss Mallory casually.

There was an astounded silence.

"You make such nervous jokes," whispered Gappy finally. She was shaking like a tiny brown leaf.

"This is *no* joke," observed Miss Mallory, "if your mother lets you, *will* you?"

"Oh, don't make me answer," implored Gappy, clasping her thin, trembling little hands. "Give me time to think."

"What are you going to answer after you think?"

"Going to answer 'yes'!" moaned Gappy, "if you give me time!"

Tears were racing down her glorified face. Seeing that the child was more upset

than was actually safe for her, Miss Mallory wisely forbore further words.

Their various emotions were rapidly tiring the young people out and Ernst Heller, knowing it, made a masterly suggestion the very minute supper was over.

"Mr. Edrington," he said calmly, "you and I will see Miss Mallory home."

This magically cleared the house of all the alien ones at once. Freed from the duty of entertaining, the three girls and Surrey, too, attacked the supper dishes and soon had them put away and the room tidied.

Then Harmony went to the foot of the stairs and called up softly:

"Lady, father, if you care to come down, we want to sing to you."

"Indeed, daughter, we very much care to," answered the father's resonant, steady voice.

It was he who now waited on Lady, not she on him, and he brought her tenderly

down to where the children were, and tucked her up on the sofa, seating himself beside her.

Harmony went to the piano and played. There floated out over the peaceful room those ever old yet ever new songs, "Home, Sweet Home," "Abide with me," "Softly Now the Light of Day," and hosts of other dearly loved favorites. Gappy's extraordinary soprano carried the air, Allegra complemented it with a passionately sweet contralto, and Surrey, who had been "Janwayed" out of thinking that whatever wasn't the air was tenor, sang a creditable improvement.

In course of time they quite warbled themselves out and then curled cozily up into corners and chairs, enjoying the calm.

"Oooo!" crooned Harmony, giving herself a congratulatory hug, "to be at home again to stay!"

"Harmony," said Allegra sharply, "don't

refer to the past again. Try to forget it. It was a shameful episode."

"All right. In the grave with the shameful episode," said tractable Harmony.

But the tinderlike Gappy had taken fire and was in a blaze.

"Shameful nothing!" she contradicted hotly. "Everything good and big and lovely that's happened came from Harmony's having hired her precious self out to Miss Mallory! Why, we're all rich now and we'll be as glad to see the tax man as if he were a newblown rose! and the friends we have! two new ones—the lodger and Jim January. Three, Miss Mallory, herself! Maybe *seven*, if those four ever come in out of the dark. And Benny's life saved, and Ted limbered, and Harmony an editor, and Surrey therapeuted and taken to the country and raised to twelve. *And* a half! And everybody having enough to eat and me going to Europe. Oh, Harmony, Harmony, you're a darling, you're more than

a darling, but I can't think of a word. You're a . . . oh, what shall I call you that fits!"

"'Cracked Hominy,'" suggested Surrey, *sotto voce* but fondly.

Harmony grew red as all the praises showered down upon her, and though wanting to put them from her eloquently, found that two dreadful words—and only those two words—would come to her assistance. Moreover, she quite saw Miss Malory's bird hanging head downward from its perch in coy embarrassment.

"Aw, there!" disclaimed Harmony in a parrot-croak.

But her laughing, blushing face was very, very happy.

She went to the sofa and hid it in her mother's lap—and felt her father's hand come softly down upon her hair.

THE END



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